

THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY CONSIDERED AS
AFFECTING ITS TRUTH.

1608/1043.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND
FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE;

AT THEIR ANNIVERSARY MEETING

IN THE HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,

On Thursday, June 2. 1791.

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and
ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY IN SCOTLAND.

To which is added,

AN APPENDIX,

Containing an abstract of the

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY

From September 1. 1790.

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EDINBURGH, JUNE 2. 1791.

At a General Meeting of the Society in Scotland for
Propagating Christian Knowledge,
The Earl of Leven, President, in the Chair,

*THE thanks of the Society were given from the Chair to
the Reverend Dr. Gerard, for his excellent Sermon this
day preached before them; and he was requested to give
his manuscript of the same, to be printed for the benefit of
the Society.*

Jo. KEMP, Sec.



THE
CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY, &c.

S E R M O N.

1 TIM. iv. 1.

NOW THE SPIRIT SPEAKETH EXPRESSLY, THAT IN
THE LATTER TIMES SOME SHALL DEPART FROM
THE FAITH.

Of the many artifices which infidels have employed in their attacks on the Christian religion, neither the least common nor the least dishonest is their availing themselves, for disfiguring its beauty and undermining its truth, of all the corruptions which the weakness or the wickedness of men have awkwardly intermixed with it or superadded to it. Against the religion of the New Testament, they have repeatedly urged objections for which it gives not even a pretence, and which can affect only human sy-

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stems, totally abhorrent from its real nature and prevailing genius.

It is with a more specious appearance both of fairness and of penetration, that they have attempted to infer its falsehood from the very existence of these corruptions; arguing, that, if God really gave the gospel as his best gift to mankind, his providence would have certainly preserved its purity, and prevented its being vitiated, so as to become unfit for answering its important end, or even in some respects subversive of it.

INSTEAD of enlarging on the several topics from which it might be evinced that this argument is wholly inconclusive, let us remark, what is more extraordinary, That the very corruptions from which it is deduced, afford evidence of the truth of Christianity. Unfavourable to the defence of this religion as, in one light, they seem to be, yet, viewed in other lights, they are a real proof of its divinity.

That corruption which has taken place, was foreseen and foretold by the first publishers of the Gospel; and is therefore an irrefragable demonstration of their divine inspiration. It was



in the very beginning of Christianity, while, as far as human eye could see, it yet remained untainted, that the Apostle of the Gentiles said, in my text, " Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith." In the context, and the other passages which relate to this subject *, he describes, as has been often incontestibly proved, even in its most singular, unprecedented, and characteristical features, that grand apostasy in the church, which did *already work*, though so covertly as to be discernible only by a divinely illuminated eye; but which early displayed itself in the subtilizing and imposing spirit of Christians, and was completed in the absurd theology, the superstitious and idolatrous worship, the impure morality, the domination, the insolence, and the cruelty of the papal church. He describes it with such accuracy and precision, as could proceed only from the inspiration of the Omnipotent, and therefore demonstrates, that HE is the Author of that religion which the Apostles taught, as revealed by him.

* 2 Tim. iii. 1, &c. 2 Thess. ii. 3,—12.

It is, I think, equally true, though not so obvious, that the "departure of some from " the faith," the corruption of Christianity which has prevailed, considered in itself, without regard to its having been predicted, far from indicating the falsity of this religion, is a strong presumption of its being a true religion. For it will appear, on examination, to be one mark of distinction between true and false religions, That always the former are corrupted, and the latter improved, by length of time. Both the parts of this proposition are susceptible of the fullest evidence: And, in pursuing the argument, I shall state the evidence of both, and then deduce the conclusions which they warrant.

I. FIRST, I shall shew, that universally and invariably true religions have, in course of time, degenerated and been corrupted. They are only three, the primeval religion of mankind, the Jewish, and the Christian.

I. I BEGIN with the primeval religion of mankind. But what was this? The generality of infidels will eagerly answer, Pure natural

religion. If it was, they will certainly acknowledge that this was a true religion: and that it was early and universally corrupted in a miserable manner, they cannot deny.

One of them, however, far superior in penetration to the rest, is singular in asserting, that “ polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily “ must have been, the first and most ancient “ religion of mankind *;” and he endeavours to support the assertion both by reasonings, and from history.—On supposition, that the first men were left to search out their religion by the powers of unassisted Nature, his *reasonings* would perhaps be solid: and, by producing them, he has exploded the favourite positions of his more reserved brethren, concerning the sufficiency of reason, the plainness and perfection of the law of Nature, and the inutility of revelation. Indeed, conclusively as the whole of natural religion may be *proved* by reason, yet natural religion, *discovered* by reason, was never in fact the religion of any age or nation.—In proving his assertion from *history*, he has carefully omitted the express testimony of the history unquestionably the most ancient in the world, How-

* Hume, *Dissert.* i. § 1.

ever fair, it was doubtless prudent. For, in contradiction to the far later histories which alone he chooses to quote, the Bible clearly testifies, that the first and most ancient religion of mankind was, not polytheism or idolatry, but the worship of the one true God.—At the same time, it invalidates all the *reasonings* by which he would prove that it must have been otherwise: for it supposes not that circumstance, on the reality of which their whole force depends; but establishes quite the reverse. It supposes not, that the first rude and ignorant generation of men discovered this pure religion by the force of reason; and therefore is not affected by any of the improbabilities of this having happened, which he so anxiously enumerates. On the contrary, it accounts for this: It affirms that they were not left to themselves; that they were taught by God; that, from the very beginning, he instructed them by revelation; and that revelation was not only the mode of conveying to them all their religious principles, but the sole foundation of some of them.

It is not necessary for our present purpose, to describe the religion of the state of inno-

cence. From the lights held out by Moses, we may, I think, collect, that the primeval religion of the lapsed world included the great principles of natural religion, as far as the rudeness of the earliest men qualified them for apprehending them, One perfect God, the Creator and Governor of the world, the object of their worship and obedience; together with the institution of the Sabbath, in memory of the creation *; an intimation of the redemption of the world †; and the rite of sacrifice ‡, both as a mode of worship, and as typical of the appointed method of redemption. And, so far as we know, this continued to be the form of the true religion throughout the patriarchal age, with the addition only of informations concerning the line from which the Redeemer was to spring, the new promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, and the rite of circumcision as the sign of God's covenant with them. But it is not necessary, on account of these few acceessions, to consider the Abrahamic as a new religion.

* Gen. ii. 2, 3.

‡ Chap. iv. 3, 4.

† Chap. iii. 15.

THIS religion, of divine original, was in all its parts very early corrupted. Not to inquire into the antediluvian defections from it, we are certain, that before the calling of Abraham it had been very generally relinquished ; the one true God forsaken ; false gods introduced ; the memory of the creation lost ; the memorial of it, the Sabbath, neglected ; the promises of redemption forgotten ; and sacrifice, the type of it, abused. This corruption formed paganism, of which every succeeding species was worse than the preceding, and every species became worse in time than it had been at first.

FROM all the accounts which we have either of ancient nations or of rude nations latterly discovered, it seems evident, that the worship of the heavenly bodies is the species of idolatry into which mankind every where first declined. The sun is the most glorious of all sensible objects, the fountain of light and heat, the source of fertility, the cause of the revolutions of the seasons. His splendour and his usefulness naturally attracted the attention of men. While they kept in mind the principles of true religion, they regarded him only as the sensible repre-

tative of the one God. But, forgetting them by degrees, losing all memory of the creation, and sinking deeper into sense, they began to adore him for his own sake, and rested in “the “work,” without “acknowledging the work-“master *.” We know from history, that some nations held the sun to be the only lord of heaven; and it is probable that he was the first object of idolatry in every nation. But he continued not long to be the only object of it. Other parts of Nature came to be “deemed” likewise “gods which govern the world †:” the less splendid luminaries, the moon and the stars; the earth; the elements, fire, wind, and thunder; whatever either promoted or obstructed men’s enjoyment of the productions of Nature; became gradually the objects of their adoration. Thus, degenerating continually, they multiplied their gods, till at length they numbered among them almost every thing useful and every thing hurtful.—In the beginning of this idolatry, their ritual was simple, expressive only of their reverence ‡. It was necessarily increased with the number of their gods;

* Wisd. xiii. 1.

† Ver. 2.

‡ Job, xxii. 27.

they came to be worshiped by artificial symbols, or by fire ; and into the ritual of every god, many silly ceremonies were introduced : from trivial they grew absurd ; they degenerated into cruelty ; they terminated in human sacrifices.

THE second species of idolatry, the worship of dead men deified, was early introduced by the passions of men. Esteem of a revered parent swelled into adoration : affection led to “ honour as a god the child soon taken a way *.” The establishment of civil society and the successive inventions of arts gave it a rapid progress : veneration, gratitude, admiration, raised the founders of states, the authors of useful discoveries, public benefactors, illustrious kings, rulers, and warriors, after their death, into divinities.—This species of idolatry was in every respect worse than the former. It did not all at once banish that, but was superadded to, or incorporated with it : to bestow plausibility on the worship of their consecrated hero, they gave him the name, and invested him with

the government, of some of the celestial bodies; Osiris by the Egyptians, and Belus by the Assyrians, was called the sun; by degrees, the planets, the earth, the sea, the air, mountains, rivers, almost every part of Nature, had some deity attached to it. Their false gods were therefore multiplied: and, by being conceived, sometimes as a part of Nature, and sometimes as its presiding god, confusion and inconsistency were introduced into the character and attributes of each.—The most stupendous parts of Nature, though unworthy of our worship, are deserving of our highest admiration; were they animated, they must be deemed far more glorious than human creatures: but, miserable is the absurdity of supposing dead men to be immortal gods.—The former were universal deities: the latter only local, contractedly limited in their attachments and their operation.—The introduction of them accumulated superstitious rites of worship: it required numerous and complex ceremonies, expressive of the character, the exploits, or the benefits of each hero god.

This form of polytheism, bad at first, still grew worse.—The number of their gods was

continually increased, till, in every nation, it became enormous. The first gods had probably possessed considerable merit in their mortal state ; and, in their immortal, were conceived watchful, for promoting virtue, in their several provinces : but afterwards, multitudes were deified without a pretence to any merit ; and many whose vices rendered them infamous and execrable. Heaven was crowded with abandoned wretches unfit to be tolerated on earth. Additions were made to the history of each god, till their mythology became a huge mass of inconsistencies and indecencies. The characters and deeds of their divinities would have disgraced humanity, and held forth examples and patrons for every crime. With those whom they supposed removed into the heavens, they at length proceeded to associate some of the most worthless of the living ; raising altars, and paying divine honours, with the most abject adulation, to those at whose cruelty they trembled, and whose profligacy they could not behold without abhorrence.—For some time their devotion was directed solely to their invisible gods ; Homer gives no hint of the use of images, and for some ages the Romans had

none: their worship consisted wholly in prayers, hymns, and sacrifices. But growing superstition soon demanded statues of the gods, and plunged its infatuated votaries into the shameful folly of adoring the works of their own hands, “falling down to the stock of a tree *,” “speaking to that which hath no life, calling “for health upon that which is weak, praying “for life to that which is dead, and for a good “journey asking that which cannot set a foot “forward †.” Their religious rites were multiplied and complicated: suitably to the imperfection of their gods, they were sometimes meanly flattering, sometimes outrageously abusive; and suitably to their different characters, many of them became madly riotous, abominably impure, or inhumanly barbarous.

TO WHICH IS ADDED A HISTORY OF

THE last degeneracy of the primeval religion, was the worship of brutes and inanimate things, which prevailed chiefly among the Egyptians and their colonies. That it was the most detestable form of Paganism, it is unnecessary to spend time in evincing: And it pro-

* Isa. xliv. 19. † Wisd. xiii. 17, 18.

ceeded from evil to worse.—It seems to have arisen from the history of their hero-gods being recorded in hieroglyphics; in which the figures of brutes and vegetables were employed as the marks or symbols of their several attributes and exploits. Fond of their hieroglyphics, they substituted these symbols of their divinities, in place of the images of them in human shape, which had been used formerly. The symbolical representations were engraved in their temples; and by being constantly in their view while they worshipped their god, they became closely associated with him in their imaginations, and shared in their worship: they engaged the readier and the greater veneration by being considered as instituted by the god himself.—Accustomed in this manner to venerate the figure of a plant or animal, they came by a very easy step to hold the real one sacred, as at least a symbol of the god: And next, forgetting that it was but a symbol, they adored it as itself divine.—Each symbol had different significations; and each attribute was represented by different symbols: in consequence of these two circumstances together, their animal and vegetable deities were multi-

plied, till they comprehended whatever had any quality remarkable enough to fit it for being an hieroglyphic. For expressing complex notions, in this kind of writing, they had united the parts and members of different species ; and hence monsters and chimeras were added to the number of their gods.

INSTEAD, therefore, of “ finding mankind the more plunged into idolatry, the farther we mount up into antiquity ; and no marks, no symptoms of any more perfect religion,” as has been confidently asserted * to be clear from the testimony of history ; we are assured by the oldest of histories, that in the remotest antiquity a more perfect religion, the acknowledgment and worship of the One God, did prevail : and not only from it, but from the writings still extant in every kind, we learn with certainty, that from this religion mankind deviated only by degrees, and were not plunged into the lowest degradations of idolatry but in the course of ages. In Greece, the polytheism of the heroic times was, for its purity and

* Hume, ib.

moral influence, venerable in comparison with the mass of superstitions, which composed its religion in its most civilized and enlightened periods.

2. THE next true religion given to the world, was the Jewish. It may be viewed in two different lights ; as the religious system of the Hebrew nation ; and as a preparation for the Christian dispensation. In respect of both it was, by the Jews, gradually corrupted from its original purity : but with circumstances so different, that it will be necessary to mark them separately.

CONSIDERED in the former light, it contains that system of belief and that body of laws and worship, which Moses delivered to the Israelites : and it was completed by the digest which he gave them ; all succeeding priests and prophets and rulers being only the guardians, the interpreters, or the executioners of it, but having no authority to alter or to add to it. The Mosaical religion, viewed in this light, was, The acknowledgment of the One God, as both the God of the universe, and their peculiar God

and righteous Governor ; and the worship of him by a multifarious ceremonial, accurately determined by his authority.

It was by the intermixture of idolatry, that the Israelites corrupted the purity of this religion. They began with worshiping God by an image ; and that very early : the golden “ calf,” the Egyptian representative of Osiris, they prevailed on Aaron to “ fashion” for a visible representative of Jehovah *. They did not long discontinue the impiety. When the mother of Micah had founded silver into images, she regarded this as “ dedicating it to Jehovah † :” when Micah had got “ a Levite” to officiate as “ priest” before his images, he confidently promised himself, on that account, the favour of Jehovah ‡. By this priest, the children of Dan “ asked counsel of Jehovah : §” they afterwards carried him away with the images, and set them up ; and “ Jonathan” the grandson of Moses, “ and his sons,” continued for a long time the “ priests” in this idolatrous service ||. This worship of the true God by

* Exod. xxxii. 1, &c.

† Judg. xvii. 3.

‡ Ver. 13.

§ Chap. xviii. 5, 6.

|| Ver. 18,—30.

images, was established in the kingdom of Israel, by the “calves” which, for preventing the people from going out of its territory to worship, were “set up at Dan and Bethel * :” and it continued as long as that kingdom stood. The introduction of images brought along with it the use of other forbidden modes. Co-eval with it was their worshipping in forbidden places: “the house of the Lord was at Shilo, “all the time” that “Jonathan and his sons “were priests” to the tribe of Dan †: the temple was at Jerusalem, when the ten tribes sacrificed to their idols in the two extremities of their country: their “high places,” their “mountains,” their “groves,” and their “green trees,” are frequently mentioned with censure. In time they adopted likewise “rites” disallowed by their law, mixing with their worship of the true God, ceremonies which their neighbours used in serving false gods.

They were not content with these corruptions: they took false gods into partnership with Jehovah, and worshipped them in conjunction with him. While they were yet “in the

* 1 Kings xii. 26, &c.

† Judg. xviii. 30, 31.

“ wilderness, they joined themselves into Baal-peor, and bowed down to the gods of Moab; “ and did eat of their sacrifices *: yea they “ took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the “ star of their god Remphan, figures which they “ made to worship them †.” The very next generation after Joshua, “ followed other gods, “ of the gods of the people that were round “ about them, and bowed themselves to them, “ and served Baal and Ashtaroth ‡.” Into this species of idolatry they thenceforth were continually revolting: they practised it with little intermission: many instances of it are recorded in their history: and many judgments are denounced against it by their prophets. Yet they went forward in it, till at length “ according to the number of their cities, were the “ Gods of Judah, and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem, their altars to “ burn incense unto Baal §.” They ceased not, till they placed their images in the temple itself “ to defile it ||.”—They multiplied their idolatrous ceremonies of worship, in full pro-

* Numb. xxv. 2, 3. Psal. cvi. 28.

† Amos v. 26. Acts vii. 43. ‡ Judg. ii. 12, 13.

§ Jer. xi. 13. || Chap. vii. 30. xxxii. 34.

portion to the multitude of their idols. They studiously collected and eagerly adopted the most abominable rites of all the species of polytheism, practise' by any of the nations with which they were acquainted; uniting together their most discordant usages, “ slaying the children in the vallies under the clifts of the rocks * ; cakes to the queen of heaven, and drink-offerings unto other gods †, cutting themselves ‡, making their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech § ; every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, weeping for Tammuz, worship- ing the sun towards the east || .”

Nay so depraved they had become, that a little before the captivity they seem to have thought of renouncing the true God altogether, and confining themselves to the worship of false gods ; for they said, “ We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone ¶ .”

By their captivity in Babylon, they were indeed cured of their propensity to idolatry, and

* Isa. lxvii, 5.

+ Jer. vii. 16.

† Chap. xli. 5.

§ Chap. xxxii. 35.

|| Ezek. viii. 10, 14, 16.

¶ Chap. xx. 32.

brought back to their original theology.—But what was consequent on this, gives a new confirmation of our proposition: for this renovated religion they soon began to corrupt, and have persisted in progressively corrupting, though in a different manner. While the Sadducees sprung up, sceptics or infidels with respect to important articles of faith, the rest plunged themselves into superstition or fanaticism. They magnified their ceremonial law, and rested in it more and more: they incumbered it with new rites, and additional circumstances of observance. They subtilized on their moral precepts, till they explained them away, and rendered them compatible with every vice. They set themselves to invent traditions, they increased them rapidly, and they yielded them higher and higher reverence, till they “made “ the commandment and word of God of none “ effect, by their tradition.*. They became acquainted with the learning and philosophy of the east; they intermixed its “ fables and “ genealogies †” with their religion, and by the

* Mat. xv. 6. Mark vii. 13.

† 1 Tim. i. 4. Tit. i. 14. iii. 9,

intermixture sophisticated the doctrines and perverted the morals which the scripture taught.

CONSIDERED in the second light, as a preparation for the Christian dispensation, the Jewish religion, besides the types involved in its ceremonial, and the notices of the design of redemption which had been given before the time of Moses, comprehended a long series of prophecies concerning it, was gradually reared by their unfolding more and more the nature of that dispensation, and was completed only when Malachi the last of the prophets had written. It is from that period, that the corruption of this part of the religion of the Israelites commenced: and it has become extreme.

Misunderstanding their scriptures, and overlooking many prophetical intimations, they persuaded themselves that their religion was perfect, and in all its parts unchangeable and perpetual. Possessed by this idea, they could conceive no use for a Messiah, but to extend it to all nations: and warped by worldly passions, they supposed that he would effectuate this, as a

glorious and triumphant prince, exalting them to the summit of temporal prosperity, and bringing the whole earth into subjection to them. Milled by these false notions, by them explaining whatever seemed reconcileable, and neglecting whatever was repugnant, they were led into greater misconception of the prophecies. They found not in Jesus the character which they expected ; they rejected and they crucified him.

They have remained stubborn. They were early accused of erasing some predictions ; they have been often charged with wilfully falsifying some passages. The charge has been carried too far : but that in a few instances they have attempted it, that in more they have purposely preferred false readings casually introduced, to such as are unquestionably genuine, but more favourable to Christianity, there seems to be evidence. It is certain that Daniel, whom their fathers ranked among the prophets, and from whom alone they learned the name **MESSIAH**, they have, only because his predictions are the most precise, for many ages denied to be a prophet.

In perverting the meaning of the prophecies, they have been indefatigable. The clearest predictions concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, and by the Jews before his coming owned to be clear, they soon after began to deny, and have persisted in denying to have any relation to him; many which even their own early traditions refer to him, their later writers wrest from their intent: And they apply them to other persons and events, concerning which they cannot agree among themselves, but in none of which imagination itself can find them verified; nay to events forged on purpose to serve as an accomplishment of them, and which may be disproved from their own traditions.—Having devised such semblances of their accomplishment in others, they deny that they give any intimation of the Messiah. While in the plainest parts of Scripture, history and precept, the nature of which can admit nothing beyond the obvious literal meaning, they are licentious in deducing mysteries, the most chimerical and ridiculous, from letters, and points, and casual or capricious modes and circumstances of writing; they obstinately deny that in prophecy, the nature of which admits

and even invites it, there are any secondary series, any intimations, under types, of a higher archetype ; nay, they insist on interpreting literally expressions evidently figurative and metaphorical, the import of which is clearly ascertained by the whole analogy of scripture language. In the predictions of the Messiah's glory, they can perceive only worldly greatness ; but neither the important object of his first coming, nor the majesty of his second. They deny that his kingdom can be spiritual, because its whole nature was not as precisely and as explicitly predefined by the prophets, as it could be delineated by himself.

For eluding the force of prophecy, they have stuck at no expedient. To reconcile to their ideas, predictions of sufferings and death, expressed in the plainest terms, described in the most circumstantial manner, and unequivocally pointed to the Messiah, they ages since devised the fiction, contradictory to traditions preserved by themselves, of two Messiahs. All the predictions concerning the reception of the Gentiles to equal privileges with themselves, they have diluted into notices that the nations were to be their subjects. They have listened

to one impostor after another, without a single feature of the true Messiah: they have fixed æra after æra for his appearance: Disappointed in them all, they contrive unsubstantial reasons for its being delayed: and while they convert the absolute predictions of his coming into conditional promises, they misinterpret the promise of their being blessed in him, clearly suspended on the condition of their receiving him, and accompanied with intimations, owned by their early doctors, that but a small part of Israel would be actually saved by him, into absolute predictions of their universal salvation; the failure of which they hold forth as a demonstration that he is not yet come.

To fortify themselves in unbelief, they have not scrupled to extenuate the idolatry of their ancestors; to pronounce outward ceremonial worship more excellent than inward piety and moral virtue; to affirm that the Messiah was promised solely as a king, not as a law-giver, nor so much as to reveal any thing new; to deny that they are required, in order to their salvation, to believe in him when he comes; and indeed they leave scarcely any foundation in the prophecies, for themselves or their fa-

thers ever expecting that a Messiah was to come.

3. THE third true religion is the Christian. The New testament exhibits it in its purity. That it has been grievously corrupted, infidels glory in proclaiming, and Christians are nowise concerned to dissemble. Every history of the church bears testimony to the fact, and discloses the nature and the progress of its depravation. In a case of such notoriety, a very brief sketch will be sufficient.

By being blended with the ideas and speculations of false philosophy, the simple doctrines of the Gospel began very early to be adulterated. From that philosophy, subtilties were borrowed for defining them with precision, and hypotheses for explaining them ; and new ones were continually invented. Discordant definitions were adopted, and tenaciously maintained. Controversies concerning them were agitated with heat, and debated with all the arts of misapplied acuteness. Every controversy produced contradictory decisions by those who equally usurped authority to fix the faith of Christians. Every decision engendered new controversies,

and inflamed fiercer contentions. Investigation was stretched to inquiries above the reach of man, and prostituted to frivolous questions and logomachies unworthy of his notice. By such decisions as had the good fortune to predominate, new creeds were continually fabricated ; new terms of distinction consecrated ; the heads of doctrine, the articles of faith, unreasonably multiplied ; many false doctrines established. To give them support, divine authority was more and more attributed to human writings ; and all the jargon of scholastic metaphysics, and all the sophistry of dialectics, were laboriously employed.

In proportion as the doctrines of the gospel were tortured from their original simplicity, into endless intricacies of frigid refinement, they became unfit for touching the heart or influencing the practice, for serving as motives to holiness, as roots from which piety and virtue might derive nourishment and vigour. The precepts, likewise, of the Gospel, whose simplicity gives them a venerable dignity and a commanding authority, were explained and analized with a dry minuteness, better calculated for perplexing the understanding, than for

impressing them on the conscience. They were avowedly evaded by maxims of loose casuistry ; and their obligation superseded by superstitious commutations, penances, indulgences, and dispensations. Perfection was placed, not in substantial goodness, but in celibacy, monachism, voluntary austerities, and unnatural mortifications.

The simple worship of Christianity was soon deformed by the admixture, first of Jewish, and next of Pagan ceremonies. Baptism and the eucharist were administered with empty pageantry and idle mummery ; they were transformed into terrific mysteries ; new virtues were ascribed to them ; new pomp was employed in solemnizing them ; the corruption of the latter issued in the monster, transubstantiation. To the few rites enjoined by the Gospel, many were added ; and from unnecessary, they became abominable : from “ glorying in “ the cross of Christ *,” they passed to using the sign of it, as a charm, on all occasions ; from praying for the dead, they proceeded to pray to them ; from commemorating the mar-

* Gal. vi. 14.

tyrs, to worship them ; from respecting their relics, to adore them, and to induc them with the power of miracles ; from tolerating pictures and images, first to place them in churches, and afterwards to fall down before them. Fasts and festivals without number were successively instituted. Prayers, in the beginning short and artless, were extended into complex liturgies, infected with all the niceties and errors of their faith.

The genuine spirit of Christianity has been no less wofully depraved. The Apostles, though inspired, claimed no " dominion over faith * ;" they insisted on the reception only of what was clearly revealed ; they gave indulgence to human weakness in whatever affected not the very essence of religion † ; they reserved their anathemas for obstinate wickedness. But they who came after them, from almost the earliest time, have imposed upon others their own precarious opinions, their determinations concerning what is not revealed ; their far-fetched deductions from Scripture ; and even the technical terms which they had coined for expressing them.

* 2 Cor. i. 24. † Rom. xiv. 1, &c. Phil. iii. 15, 16.

They have separated from, and excommunicated, one another for the most trifling, nay for verbal differences ; and, while they were indulgent to crimes, denounced damnation against whatever they were pleased to denominate heresy.—

As soon as the conversion of the emperors put it in their power, the leaders of the church grasped at riches, dignities, and political influence. Clerical orders were multiplied : the bishops assumed a high rank : archbishops and patriarchs exalted themselves above them : each see was not only scrambled for with indecent ambition, but purchased by the basest arts ; and one see contended with another, for pre-eminence to flatter pride, and power to domineer.—In all the churches these evils grew, till the dexterous and persevering efforts of the bishop of Rome raised him to supremacy over most of them, subjected the kings of the world to his nod, made him the vicar of Christ, a god upon earth, and vested him with absolute dominion, which he most assiduously exercised in tyrannizing over all, in disturbing the peace, and dissolving the laws of society, in authorizing all former corruptions and making great additions to them in enforcing them by persecutions, massacres,

and wars, in degrading religion into an engine of the most unrighteous policy.

In a word, from small beginnings, numberless corruptions, aided by centuries of ignorance, grew up into that "mystery of iniquity *," which formed the predominant religion at the Reformation, the total depravation of which is so well known, and so explicitly confessed by popish writers themselves, that I may spare myself the pain of attempting the odious portrait.

THUS every religion that has any claim to truth, has been in time corrupted.

II. THE SECOND part of our proposition, That all false religions have, in time, been amended and improved, is equally true; and, so far as our present design requires it, may be more briefly evinced. Each of the depravations which we have mentioned, having at length acquired a determinate shape, became a false religion, for some time prevalent, established, and unquestioned. But in the progress

* 2 Thess. ii. 9.

of inquiry and knowledge, they have been all examined, cleared in some measure from the grossness which they had gradually contracted, and reduced to a less exceptionable form.

1. To begin with paganism. The Egyptian worship of brutes and vegetables astonished the inquisitive: it shocked the idolaters of other sects; it was oftener than once legally proscribed by the Romans, who gloried in adopting the gods and the rites of all nations, as a token of their piety and the cause of their prosperity: it could scarcely fail sometimes to stagger its own votaries. They extenuated its absurdity, by resolving the ignoble objects of their adoration into mere emblems both of herogods and of the celestial bodies, the divinities acknowledged by all idolaters. Emblems they had originally been: but by ingenuity in illustrating their significance, they were rendered more plausible than at their introduction, and represented as even more refined and expressive images of the gods, than the idols set up by other pagans.

THE worship of dead men, however implicitly and extensively practised, could not, naked

and undisguised, escape condemnation as soon as it had excited the curiosity of thinking men. Even the symbolical images of the Egyptians, it has been speciously supposed, were contrived on purpose to veil the objectionable genealogies of the gods. To give that worship the fairer appearance, speculative men devised the distinction of souls, into human, heroic, and demanic: when the gods were conceived, not as ordinary mortals, but as Superior Beings who had deigned to visit the earth for the sake of mankind, and lived only to heap blessings on them, there was a shew of reason in paying them religious honours. This hypothesis was, however, contradicted by their mythology, which proved their gods to have been mere men, often not of the worthiest kind; and the authority of their admired poets had early rendered this too sacred to be rejected; but they explained it away, and represented the popular histories of the gods as only ingenious allegories, shadowing forth moral or physical truths.

At an early period, in the most civilized nations of the east, the more enlightened worshippers of the celestial bodies reformed the received

Idolatry, so far as to confine their adoration to the sun, and, reprobating images, to address him by no other medium but fire.—When, in other nations, the elements, and even the most splendid luminaries were, by the researches of philosophers, ascertained to be inanimate, the worship of them required a vindication; and it was attempted by the refinement of referring it, not to the material mass, but to the intelligent divinity who inhabited and governed it.

BUT none of the forms of paganism, however each of them might be disguised, or however the absurdities of them all might be shuffled out of sight by involving them in confusion, blending them together, and deriving support to one from another in their turns, could bear the scrutiny of enlightened minds. Without entering into the controverted import of the mysteries, we may remark that the speculations of the old philosophers of Greece forced them to acknowledge One supreme God, distinct from all the vulgar deities, though along with him they continued to admit these. But the lustre of religious truth diffused by the gospel,

constrained the later philosophers to acknowledge him as the Only God ; and, determined as they were not to relinquish the popular religion, to endeavour by a new refinement to render it consistent with that acknowledgment. Even the brute-gods of Egypt were made only emblematical of his several attributes ; the fables of their hero-gods, but parabolical histories of his providence ; the deified parts of nature, no more than his sensible representatives ; all their rites, a varied service to him under different names, or different ideas. Their idolatries thus explained away by a reference to the true God, gave paganism the most unexceptionable form of which it was capable. — In some countries, this refinement rested not with philosophers. Whether in an early age, by means of the Jewish scriptures, or at a later era, by the publication of the Alcoran, the Magian religion of the east was much reformed ; one supreme and eternal God introduced ; the worship of him alone established by books accounted divine ; and established so firmly that its votaries, though full of superstitions, continue to detest idolatry, and professedly worship before the fire or towards the rising sun, only as the

purest types of the Divinity. Nay in almost all the popular religions of Asia, we are informed that, amidst numberless absurdities, and idolatrous usages, One God is ultimately adored.

2. THE religion of the Israélites sophisticated as it was by idolatry, before the captivity, may justly be called false. From that idolatry, it has ever since been completely purged: and their present ritual, with all its deformities, is far preferable to the heathenish inventions of their ancestors.—Whether, or how far, the doctrine of the Jews concerning the Messiah, has been amended since their rejection of him, it is unnecessary to examine. As their unbelief is founded on the most rooted prejudices and the most determined misunderstanding of the prophecies, it is only from very extraordinary events that their conversion can be expected; and till it take place there can be little alteration in their sentiments concerning Christ. For this, the predicted time is not yet come; but when it comes, their conversion will be perfect; all their errors will be relinquished; as national, their religion will cease; as divine,

all of it that was intended permanent will be reduced to the purity of the scripture: and even to the Christian world, "the receiving of them will be life from the dead *."

3. WHEN from the accumulated corruptions of Christianity, through a series of ages, poverty had sprung up, and reached its maturity, the absurdities and abuses with which it abounded, began at length to be discovered. By the revival of learning, and by the application of it to an examination of the established system, its errors have been much corrected.

Even by those who still adhered to the profession of it, it has been in some measure refined. Some of its doctrines have been explicitly renounced; some of them explained away; many of them softened. Some of its superstitions have been disclaimed; some suffered to fall into disuse; others strip of part of their pageantry. The saints have been represented as not invoked for the benefit of their merits, but only entreated for their prayers; images, as not themselves objects of worship,

but merely helps to a lively conception and remembrance of the person whom they portray. Indulgences are more sparingly dealt out, less eagerly sought after, and their efficacy is less extolled.—The spirit of popery has been meliorated. The reading of the scriptures has been more freely permitted to the people; and by vernacular versions and expositions, means are supplied for their better understanding them. Every where the horrors of the inquisition have have been mitigated; in some places they have ceased. Among the most bigotted nations, discussions which once would have been repressed by the executioner, begin to be ventured on with impunity, and listened to without hazard: and in nations more enlightened, free inquiry is encouraged and pursued with ardour. A liberal toleration has been, not only recommended by the learned, and granted by discerning princes, but approved by the multitude, practised by priests, and even indulged by popes. Their authority, both spiritual and temporal, has come to be very faintly submitted to, and very cautiously exercised. Some religious orders, useless or noxious, have been suppressed, and others restricted, or reformed.

But among those who separated from the church of Rome, a far more important restoration of pure Christianity has taken place. By the first reformers, the scripture was recognized as the only rule of religious faith and practice : and to the investigation of its genuine sense they applied all the means of which they were possessed, with success in their circumstances astonishing. They exploded all the grossest errors ; and the purity of the doctrine, worship, and morals, which all of them established, though not untainted, was sufficient to put to shame the church which they forsook. That they should accomplish so much, is wonderful ; that they should have effected a perfect reformation would have been miraculous. They could not rid themselves of every prejudice : to some errors they remained attached ; by their detestation of others they were driven into an opposite extreme. They were destitute of many advantages for interpreting the scriptures : and their opinions were biased by a false philosophy. They attempted too precise definitions of speculative tenets ; they dogmatically decided dubious points of doctrine : they were unreasonably tenacious of their fave-

ral decisions; they were too easily and too deeply irritated by contradiction to these: by aiming at an impracticable uniformity, they broke that union which they ought to have preserved. By an abuse of liberty, to which they who have newly acquired it are ever prone, crude conceits, wild notions, and extravagant practices were sometimes vented; and sects founded on them, some of which, after flashing for a while, vanished away, and some, throwing off the grosser matter, have assumed a more decent form.—All the defects of the first reformation are not yet supplied; many causes have concurred in preventing it; but some of them have been in part removed; and for the removal of them all, there seems to be a happy preparation. New means of elucidating scripture are every day discovered and employed: there is a very general disposition among protestants to examine with impartiality what it really teaches: the fallible determinations and deductions of men are less implicitly revered; some doctrines have come to be explained more soberly: many frivolous controversies are exploded, and the more important questions are often debated with coolness and candour: less

stress is laid on the minute distinctions of parties; and many of every party have learned to judge equitably of others, and to converse amicably with them. Though this be not universally the state of things in the protestant churches, it is so in a considerable degree: and though the extension of it may be checked at times, there is reason to believe that it will not be finally stopped. In the course of free inquiry, errors cannot but be broached; the infirmity of men, it may be, can never permit their exemption from every mistake, or prevent every difference of sentiment: but by the unrestrained progression of such inquiry, we trust that all the really important truths of our religion will in time be irrefragably ascertained and unanimously acknowledged; that Christians will harmoniously acquiesce in these; and that, disregarding other things, they will concur in considering and using Christianity, as a system of simple principles revealed for the sanctification, the consolation, and the salvation of mankind.

4. THERE is another false religion, the Mahometan imposture; which claims our atten-

tion the more, because it seems at first sight unfavourable to our position, but on inspecting the peculiarity of its origin and structure, will turn out a remarkable confirmation of it. We had no occasion to mention it under the former head; for it was not a natural and gradual depravation of any one true religion. It was a studied composition from Judaism, Christianity, and the heathen superstitions of Arabia, projected and formed by one man, and fixed by a written standard. Being in its original a mixture from religions true and false, its progress, as might have been expected, has participated in the fates of both.

Since religions wholly true have always been in time depraved, what this imposture had in common with them, already in the first delivery tainted, could not but be liable to farther depravation. Having a definite standard, disputes naturally arose about its meaning, and produced a separation into sects which still subsist. Including principles of general truth, there came of course speculations, discussions, and questions concerning them; and these would have been more frequent if its votaries had abounded more in curiosity or ingenuity.

Mahomet had borrowed from the scriptures, many moral precepts in tolerable purity ; but some of them have been debased by his followers. In the beginning, he claimed a right only to admonish and persuade ; but he soon stript his religion of this gentle spirit, by declaring himself authorised to compel assent and exterminate all opposers, and commanding his disciples to do the same. Their hatred of Christianity has sometimes led them to deny things favourable to it, which he admitted. Many parts of the Alcoran are corruptions of scripture histories : if these have been more corrupted since ; if multitudes of fables have been added to them ; or if tenets originally false, have been rendered more absurd ; if, for example, a sensual paradise has been described in more dissolute terms ; this is only that declension from bad to worse, which has happened in all false religions during the prevalence of ignorance, and gone on till they reached the extremest point of their degeneracy. — Mahomet alleged no open miracles in support of his mission, and appealed not to any clear prediction of him in the extant scriptures : ought we to reckon it a deterioration, or a melioration of his scheme, that his

followers have marked his birth and early life with prodigies and presages, ascribed to him thousands of miracles, and attempted to discover intimations of his coming in the bible as it stands ? Being fictions, they add to the falsities of Mahometanism : could they be made plausible, they would supply its total want of evidence.

But some real amendments it has unquestionably received. They were begun even by its author : having employed more than twenty years in completing the Alcoran, he corrected errors in what had been first written, resolved difficulties, and obviated objections ; and salved the practice from the charge of inconsistency, by giving the result of his maturer reflection or growing experience, as new revelations revoking the former ones. His followers have laboured to reconcile some of the contradictions which were left remaining in it : they have softened or explained away some of its most glaring absurdities, as its exclusion of women from paradise. They have supplied many defects in its laws, and in many cases the interpretations of the doctors are better than the text. Mahomet enjoined his followers to

extirpate all other religions by the sword, and for some time they executed the mandate in its utmost rigour: but even the ferocious Saracens soon adopted less bloody maxims; the Persians lay other religions under very moderate restraints; and the Turks have indulged toleration so far that, in the very vicinity of their capital, a Christian church has subsisted for ages, oppressed indeed, though even this more from avarice than from religious zeal, but suffered to retain its constitution and its worship, and to regulate its own concerns; nay, by some of their conquests, protestants have recovered the liberty and ease, of which the bigotry of papists had before totally deprived them.

That this false religion has not been more extensively reformed, during so considerable a length of time, may be easily accounted for. Its very nature tends to depress and contract the understanding; and the despotism which has constantly accompanied it, aggravates its effect. The powers of its votaries thus degraded, they can have little propensity to inquiry or examination; and from this they are, though not absolutely prohibited, yet strongly discour-

raged by the maxims of their prophet and his successors. They have been always involved in the profoundest ignorance, not only neglecting knowledge, but despising it; and they are utter strangers to those parts of learning particularly, the least smattering of which would expose the fables, the falsities, and the blunders of the Alcoran. Glimmerings of knowledge have led some of its adherents to detect its grossest faults; and a general diffusion of even the faintest dawn of literature would lead them either to attempt reforming it, or to renounce it.

Founded as this religion is in imposture, and contaminated as it is in its composition, it has already, by the unsearchable wisdom of God's providence, been over-ruled to produce many good effects; to put an end to idolatry in the country where it sprung up, to improve the religions of Asia, to spread far the doctrine of the divine unity; as well as to chastise the divisions, the superstitions, and the vices of Christians. True knowledge and learning will scarcely try to mend it; they will more probably discover its total falsehood, and explode it. And when we consider, that it strenuously

inculcates the first principle of true religion, One God ; that it in some measure owns the the divine mission of Moses, and of Jesus Christ, and the original inspiration of our scriptures ; and that the slenderest acquaintance with history and criticism will demonstrate the impossibility of their being falsified, as well as the absurdity of its own fictions ; On these grounds, without prying into the sense of prophecies yet wrapt up in obscurity, is it presumptuous to indulge the hope, that this false religion will in time pave the way for the general reception of Christianity by its numerous professors, and that its having been permitted to overspread so large a proportion of mankind, will in the end contribute to the bringing in of "the fulness " of the gentiles *," and to all "the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdom of "our Lord and of his Christ †?"

IN this world, nothing goes on with perfect equability ; there are unevennesses and breaks in the most regular processes of nature, and in the most connected series of events ; and every

* Rom. xi. 25,

† Rev. xi. 15,

process, every series requires a certain space of time for the completion of its course. It cannot be expected that it should be otherwise in religion: its motion, towards either corruption or improvement, must be sometimes progressive, sometimes interrupted, and sometimes retrograde; sometimes accelerated, and sometimes checked or retarded, by a variety of causes: and it is only by tracing it through a large period, that we can determine its issue. But with these restrictions, necessary to be admitted in judging of every case, it has, I think, been sufficiently evinced, that true religions are made worse, and false religions better, in a considerable length of time.

III. LET us next point out the conclusions fairly deducible from the facts which we have established.

THAT all the corruptions which have been introduced into Christianity, cannot warrant the slightest suspicion of its truth, is a consequence so clear and obvious, that it needs no illustration. If the Jew attempts by them to vindicate his rejection of the gospel, he must admit that

his own religion never came from God ; for he cannot deny that it too has been at times corrupted. The deist cannot urge the objection without exploding natural religion ; for it degenerated into paganism : If it be true, though God, far from preserving its purity, permitted this shameful degeneracy to overspread the world, why may not Christianity be also true, notwithstanding the like seeming neglect of providence ? Had the objection any force, it would necessarily infer that there never was a true religion in the world, and that atheism is the only tenable and consistent scheme.

But from our detail of the fates of different religions, we venture farther to conclude, that the very fact objected, Christianity having been corrupted, yields some real presumption of its truth. It is one feature which it has in common with all religions that have any claim to truth, and by which it differs from all religions indisputably false. This single feature is not sufficient for absolutely ascertaining, but it surely gives some indication, to which of the two families it belongs.

The indication, however slender when we attend to the mere fact, will become stronger

and more unequivocal when we examine the reasons of the fact. For we shall find that the contrariety of the fates of true and of false religions, arises from the very nature of the thing.

—True religions are the work of God, all whose plans, proceeding from his infinite perfection, must be pure and complete. It is therefore impossible that they can be improved by the wisdom of man. But the weakness of his reason, and the power of his passions, scarcely suffer him to adhere to them, precisely as God gave them. Every deviation from them must be to the worse; and it must, by biasing reason and increasing the impulse of the passions, contribute to farther deviations; till they sink into the greatest degree of corruption which the vitiated faculties of their votaries can bear.

—But false religions are the contrivances of men; and therefore, partaking in the errors and depravations of those narrow and polluted conceptions from which they spring, they must be always capable of amendment. Every alteration of men's sentiments and views, though not implying considerable improvement, will discover some blemish which they find it needful to remove from their religion. In propor-

tion as their understandings are improved, cultivated, and enlightened, they will advance to an ampler detection of its absurdities, and endeavour to correct them by progressive refinements; till at length the unsuccessfulness of all their efforts determine them to abandon it. Arrived at the point of its extreme degeneracy, every false religion destroys itself.—If it be thus, in the nature of the thing, inevitable that true religions are gradually corrupted into such as may be denominated false, and that these, after having been for some time stagnant, throw off their dregs and refine themselves, is it not a real presumption of the truth of Christianity, that it has had these revolutions?

If these conclusions be, as they appear to me, legitimate, the argument which I have stated will make some addition to the proofs of the truth and divinity of our holy religion. Slender as it may be, taken by itself, it is not undeserving of our regard: for the more numerous the proofs, especially when they are educed from circumstances untoward and unfavourable, the more irresistibly they compel our assent, and fix us in tranquil reliance, in spite of sub-

tile cavils, on " the certainty of those things
" wherein we have been instructed *."

BUT though our conclusions should, in the judgment of some, have little force, no harm can, and some good may, arise from their having been proposed. For all the great evidences of Christianity continue unimpaired : and the facts in the history of religion, which have fallen under our notice, may, without our considering them as inferring the truth of Christianity, lead us into reflections far from useless ; a few of which I beg leave to suggest.

In the whole history of religion, we cannot fail to observe, that all the corruptions of it have proceeded from the ignorance and the evil passions of men ; and that every emendation of it has been produced by the diffusion of knowledge, partly in consequence of the discoveries of reason, but principally owing to the superior light of divine revelation. The observation implies at once a strong recommendation of learning and science, and a convincing proof of the great utility and importance of re-

velation. And will it not warrant us in saying, that, since reason by itself was able to do something in religion, much may be expected from the free and sober exercise of it, illuminated and guided by revelation, and acting in subordination to it ?

Zealous have been the efforts of some, to banish Christianity from the world. Suppose it possible that they should succeed, what advantage would they gain ? Say some, the extirpation of *superstition*, a name which they choose to give to all *religion* : But, not to inquire whether this would be truly an advantage, the project is impracticable ; for the constitution of man, and the whole history of mankind, conspire to prove that universal atheism never can take place, and that human creatures will put up with the worst form of religion, rather than have none. Others promise a happier consequence, the introduction of natural religion in perfect purity. A system of it, I shall not dispute but they might compose ; though it is only by the help of that revelation to which they return so little gratitude, for the wisest of the ancients never could accomplish it : But by what means are they to qualify the bulk of mankind for en-

tering into all their reasonings ? Or by what art will they induce them, without this, implicitly to adopt their conclusions ? Suppose it, however, introduced and universally established ; still it could be only for a moment. The experience of past times demonstrates that it would quickly degenerate into polytheism and idolatry : though the acknowledgement of the One God was, in the primeval religion, fortified by a memorial of all other things being created by him, it did not long restrain them from worshipping these as gods ; and from this worship, the theism of the best philosophers was not able to recover them. The nature of the thing corroborates the illation from experience : Reason, it is justly observed by one of the acutest infidels *, can establish the belief of one God, only by careful attention to the signatures of his power and wisdom in the works of nature ; but the opinion of many gods arises from the passions naturally excited by feeling the effects of invisible power in the varied and contrary events of human life : the latter are always more obvious, and more in-

* Hume, ib. § 2.

teresting than the former ; and consequently must create a continual propensity to polytheism, which reason alone will be unable to curb. A project, therefore, to explode revelation, is in fact a project to bring the world back to the worship of stocks and stones : and whether it betrays greater narrowness of understanding, or defect of benevolence, it is not easy to determine.

From the detail of facts which we have given, it is plain that religion, in the hand of weak and fallible men, is always in danger of being corrupted. A reformation from the corruption which it had once contracted, affords no security against its being again contaminated. No sooner almost was Judaism purged from idolatry, than it degenerated anew by a mixture of infidelity, mysticism, and superstition. Into the protestant religion, with which we are most nearly concerned, considerable blemishes have sometimes found their way. Though the reformers began with declaring scripture to be the only rule of faith, teaching what they thought agreeable to it, and calling upon all men to exercise their own judgment ; yet to this fundamental principle of the reformation

neither they nor their successors have uniformly adhered. They were upbraided, by the popish writers, with the uncertainty of their doctrine, and importuned for a precise exposition of their faith: they yielded to the clamour, and reduced their theology into formal systems. At first they proposed them only as an answer to the demands of their opponents: but they quickly erected them into standards of faith, and exacted a strict conformity to them as a condition of communion. They consisted not of a series of propositions clearly revealed in scripture: but too often included definitions restricting its words to the one sense which they approved, far fetched and disputable deductions from it, subtle explications of its simple principles, and precarious hypotheses for supporting them. The diversity of these human systems occasioned controversies; the authority ascribed to each of them inflamed the spirit of contention; the fierceness of contention produced schisms: and both attachment to a particular party, and abhorrence of it, biased the minds of men from impartiality in searching the scriptures. In the collision of sects and parties, some, from excessive deference to human au-

thority, reverted nearer to the degenerate church which they had forsaken ; some affected too much a contrariety in every point ; some consecrated dogmas evidently unscriptural ; some explained away tenets really founded in the bible ; and many laid greater stress on the distinctive notions of a sect, than on active faith in the simple practical principles of the gospel.

To some depravation, our religion will be ever liable by reason of the infirmities of its professors. While they think that they are maintaining it in its purity, they may be only holding fast some error from which it has not hitherto been wholly purged. While they mean only to cast off the remains of error, they may be introducing new errors. Our duty is, to employ the best precautions for escaping from the danger to which we cannot cease to be exposed. However much Christianity may be at times depraved, it always carries along with it the means of its restoration. As the sun has in himself unvaried brightness, and power to dissipate the clouds which often obscure his light in its transmission to the earth ; so the scriptures, always pure and always the same, exhibit genuine Christianity, and afford the means of

rectifying the grossest misconceptions of it. To them let us always have recourse; to their sole authority let us bend. Let us honestly and diligently seek the truth, as it is in them; let us rest satisfied with the plain and sanctifying views of the great principles of religion, which they present; let us give no indulgence to false ingenuity in refining on them. Let us despise all frivolous and unedifying questions; let us labour, only by the “doctrine” of the gospel to cherish that “goodness *” which is its end. Pursuing this course, our religion will be as pure as the weakness of our faculties permits; and, notwithstanding its defects, will be accepted through Jesus Christ, by him who “knows eth our frame †.” Would all pursue this course, the religion of the Christian world would assume a better face: it would be regarded, not as a subject of disputation, but as the art of holy living; each man, sensible of his own fallibility in applying the infallible rule of faith, would give ready indulgence to the opinions of others; the discontinuance of speculative discussions would unite all more nearly

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* 1 Tim. vi. 3.

†. Psal. ciii. 14.

in the same faith ; they would renounce invi-
dious names of distinction ; they would glory
only in the name of Christians ; and under
this name would form a great society “ like-
“ minded, having the same love, of one ac-
“ cord, of one mind *,” striving together to
render their “ conversation” such “ as becom-
“ eth the gospel of Christ †.”

I MAKE no digression from the subject on
which I have all along insisted, when I now
turn my discourse to the present occasion, the
meeting of the Society in Scotland for propa-
gating Christian Knowledge. The very object
of its institution is, at once to bring those to
the knowledge of Christianity, who before had
no opportunity of learning it ; and to impart
it in greater purity to those who possessed only
the most adulterated form of it. This noble ob-
ject, the plan of the Society leads them to pur-
sue by the only legitimate and proper means,
instruction. They have wisely directed their
first endeavours to what promises the best ef-
fects, instilling religious principles and good

habits into the susceptible minds of the young : but they have not neglected what they had it in their power to do, for recovering those who had long been enslaved by error and superstition. By procuring translations of the sacred books, into the only language generally understood in many corners of the kingdom, they have given to multitudes an opportunity of drawing religious knowledge from the unpolluted fountains of truth, and of continually improving in it by their own application. They have extended their views to the propagation of the gospel, by the like proper means, in remote regions of the earth, wherever the vicinity of fellow-protestants gave any favourable opening. It is by such means only, that true religion has ever been spread, or corruptions of it effectually removed : it is by such means only, that these events can in any case be reasonably expected. God forbid that they who wish, or who exert themselves, for the prevalence of true religion, should at any time so far mistake their way, as to approve or aid a restraint on the profession of the falsest, by the terror of civil laws, or the smart of penalties. Nothing could more obstruct the accomplishment of their wish or the

efficacy of their exertions. Such engines may impose silence or force a feigned compliance: but they often irritate to stiffer opposition; and they never can produce conviction or conversion. No, Christians: "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal;" their temper is from heaven; and if we do not hurt it by the base alloy of human policy, they will be "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds *." When the good ends are answered, for which the inscrutable providence of God has permitted "the man of sin to exalt himself, the Lord shall consume him by the spirit and words of his mouth †." To this happy event, there are every where clear and quick advances: and the efforts of this Society are well calculated for accelerating it, so far as their influence extends.

On the manner in which the Society have employed the legitimate means of promoting the knowledge of the gospel, it is unnecessary for me to expatiate. Of the uniform integrity of their intentions, the regular publications of their proceedings, stating the simple facts, mark-

* 2 Cor. x. 4. † 2 Thess. ii. 8. Hos. vi. 5.

ing the miscarriages as well as the successes of their plans, evidence the fullest consciousness in themselves, and give others the fairest opportunity of judging. On the prudence and rectitude of their management, the continual and growing encouragement with which they meet, is the best encomium. The pious persons who planned the institution saw “ multitudes fainting ” and scattered abroad, as sheep having no “ shepherd ;” and in the spirit of their divine master *, they were “ moved with compassion ” on them. The harvest truly was plenteous, but “ the labourers were ” very “ few.” With prayers to “ the lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers,” they united their own zealous exertions to procure them. The funds which they could command for this purpose, bore no proportion to the greatness of the design : and from the nature and situation of the country, from the rude state of society and manners, from prejudices both political and religious, numberless obstructions arose in the execution of it. Yet their earliest attempts were not fruitless. The exertions of those who

* Mat. ix. 36, 37, 38.

came after them have been persevering ; they have had extensive success ; and there is reason to hope for still greater success. Some of the obstructions are removed, others are much diminished ; and for surmounting the rest, considerable advantages are obtained. Society has advanced to a more improved state ; the laws every where operate with becoming energy ; peace, security, and order are introduced ; the political prejudices are extirpated, and the religious mitigated * : Industry has taken place of idleness, partly by the measure which the Society has long prosecuted in subordination to its principal object, the education of young persons in the most necessary and useful arts of common life, and partly by the ample encouragement and assistance which Government has given to the improvement of the Highlands ; and means have been projected, which promise fair for carrying it forward with rapidity. Every

* The latest *Abstract of the Proceedings of this Society* (page 61.) contains a fact which affords a striking evidence of this. That some proprietors of lands, of the Roman Catholic profession, have promised to give all countenance and support to the teachers appointed by the Society.

degree of success which has attended the exertions of the Society, removes some obstruction, and leaves the less to be accomplished. For accomplishing what remains, there are at the same time more abundant means: the accumulation of smaller donations, which are frequent, is far from inconsiderable: there have been, and there will sometimes be, large bequests: the munificent gift recently bestowed, in a manner which precludes acknowledgments from men, but will not miss reward from that God whose highest approbation attends the unostentatious exercise of pure benevolence and piety, gives the immediate means of extending the usefulness of this institution far beyond its present limits; and will doubtless be faithfully and wisely employed for that purpose. A purpose so important, let the rich promote by willing communications from their treasures, those whose situation admits it by their assisting labours, and all by their fervent prayers. To God must be ascribed all past successes; on him must ultimately depend all future success. May he ever direct those to whom so great a trust is committed, grant a blessing on their endeav-

voirs, and provide the means of propagating truth and goodness, till his " way be known " upon earth," his " saving health among all nations *."

* Psal. lxvii. 2.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND FOR PROPAGATING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

From September 1790 to November 1791.

SOCIETY-HALL, 1st Nov. 1791.

It is with singular satisfaction that the Directors have it in their power to begin the statement of their proceedings for the present year, with the account of an accession to the funds of the Society, since the last publication, equally large and unexpected, arising from two different sources.

The first of these was announced to the Directors in April last. For some time before, a correspondence had been carried on between a respectable clergyman in the neighbouring part of the kingdom and the Secretary of the Society, respecting the nature of the institution, the state of the Society's funds, and the objects to which they are devoted. Inquiries on these points, it seems, were made at the request of a gentleman, who then had it in view to become a benefactor to the Society, but who wished previously to satisfy himself as

to the prospect of utility to the public from his intended donation. The information wanted, was immediately given, in the fullest and freest manner; and, as the Secretary was assured by his reverend correspondent, to the entire satisfaction of the gentleman at whose desire the correspondence was carried on. The hopes of the members were in consequence excited of a considerable donation; but their most sanguine ideas were far exceeded by the munificent gift of which they soon after received the notice: For in a letter from the same clergyman, towards the end of March, a trust-deed was transmitted to the Secretary, conveying to the Society the sum of **TEN THOUSAND POUNDS** stock in the national fund of the five *per cent.* annuities. The stock was transferred to a most respectable gentleman as trustee, to receive the dividends on the Society's account for a few years, if they should think it proper that the trust should continue so long; but with power to them to take the stock into their own management, in case they should so incline. This donation, so considerable and unexpected, was rendered still more remarkable by the singular delicacy of the generous donor's mind. While he took effectual measures that the benefit of his donation should be enjoyed by the public, he discovered an equal and no less effectual anxiety, that the benefactor should remain altogether unknown. The Society are therefore prevented from communicating personally to himself the sentiments of gratitude and respect with which this princely benefaction has impressed their minds. These however, they anxiously embraced the earliest opportunity of expressing to the clergyman through whose channel

this correspondence had been conducted, and to the gentleman who had been nominated, and had consented to act as trustee. By them the grateful impressions of the Society were communicated to this generous, though unknown, friend to religion and the country. As a small testimony of their gratitude (the only one in their power), the Society unanimously resolved, and immediately *assumed as members* both the gentleman who is appointed trustee, and the clergyman above referred to.

Soon after the intelligence of this large and uncommon donation had been given, the Society had the satisfaction to receive accounts of a second accession to their funds, still more considerable than the former, by a legacy of the late *Peter Huguetan, Lord Vanoryboven of Holland*. For some years, this Nobleman had been a regular and liberal benefactor to the institution, at the anniversary meetings of the Corresponding Board in London; and in 1789, the Society received from him a donation of five hundred pounds of the four *per cent.* Bank annuities, transferred to them by a deed of trust. After his death, which happened in the course of this year, it appeared, that by his will, he had, amongst a variety of other legacies to different charitable institutions, to a very large amount, bequeathed to the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge, the sum of **TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS**, for the purposes of the first and second patents; that is to say, for promoting religion, literature, and industry in the Highlands and Islands. His Lordship's executors have found it necessary, before paying any of the legacies, to have the authority of

the Court of Chancery for their procedure. This may occasion some little delay in the payment of the legacy; but there is no doubt, that in a short time the Society will be put in possession of this great and munificent bequest.

Besides these two large additions to their funds, the Society likewise, with gratitude, have to acknowledge many lesser benefactions, which it is unnecessary to particularise: One only it may be proper to mention, —a legacy of three hundred pounds, bequeathed by the late Mrs. Welsh of Edinburgh, which they lately received.

These numerous and substantial proofs of the favour of the public to this institution, the Society regard as a circumstance no less honourable than pleasing. To employ these large additions to their revenue, in the manner most consonant to the views of the donors, and the best interests of religion and the country, is their duty, and shall be their constant endeavour.

The anniversary meeting of the Corresponding Board at London for this year, was no less successful than on former occasions. The sermon was preached by the Reverend Mr. Rutledge, one of the members of the Church of Scotland, settled in London. Though the interference of an important debate in the House of Commons on the day of meeting, prevented almost all the members of both Houses of Parliament from being present; though their noble Preses, the Earl of Kinoul (whose zeal for the Society's welfare they have on every occasion experienced), was detained by bad health, and three of the stewards, by necessary business; yet upwards of one hundred and sixty noblemen

and gentlemen attended the meeting, the Earl of Glasgow being in the chair. The collection amounted to upwards of two hundred and sixty pounds. The particular thanks of the Society are due to the Earl of Glasgow, the Reverend Mr. Rutledge, the Reverend Dr. Hunter, the several noblemen and gentlemen who executed the office of stewards at the meeting, and the members of the Corresponding Board, for their services on this, as well as on many former occasions.

The lease of the Society's estate of Calroust being near a close, the Directors thought it their duty, in order to ascertain the real value of this farm, to advertise a new lease of it, publicly intimating, that the proposals, which upon the whole should appear to be the best, should be preferred. Proposals were made by different candidates, offering considerable additions of rent: After considering which, a lease was lately entered into with the former tenant, at a rent more than double of what these lands had formerly yielded. A bargain which, however advantageous to the Society, they have reason to believe, will prove by no means oppressive to the tenant.

The lease of the Society's estate of Catworth in Huntingdonshire, expired at Whitsunday 1790. Before renewing it, the Directors procured an accurate report by a gentleman on the spot, of its state and value: And soon afterwards, the Earl of Kinnoul, with his usual attention to the interests of the Society, submitted to the trouble of a minute investigation of that report; by which it was confirmed in all particulars: And his Lordship, in consequence of powers from the Directors, concluded a new lease with the

former tenant, at a rent higher by twenty pounds than the former.

The revenue arising from this last mentioned estate, together with that of some other branches of the Society's funds, are by the donors specially appropriated to the propagation of Christian Knowledge in America, and other heathen and infidel countries. The Society have not been inattentive to the proper application of these funds. Two missionaries, as has been formerly mentioned to the public, are employed by them in America, viz. the Reverend Mr. Kirkland among the Oneida, Onondago, and Seneca Indians, and the Reverend Mr. Sargeant among the Stockbridge tribes. Of the ardent zeal and indefatigable exertions of the former, the Society have repeatedly had occasion to report in the warmest terms of approbation. His last journals afford sufficient evidence that his labours are continued with uniform earnestness and perseverance. The labours of Mr. Sargeant, though in a narrower sphere, appear to be faithful and assiduous. What success may ultimately attend the exertions of the Society in these remote and unenlightened regions, it is not for the members to pronounce. That many individuals among the Savages have, by the blessing of God, become savingly acquainted with the truths of the Gospel, and that the morals and external conduct of great numbers have been improved, they have sufficient ground to believe. One thing is acknowledged by all who have access to be acquainted with these tribes, that those of them among whom the light of the Gospel has been in any measure diffused, have be-

come less addicted to excess in the use of spirituous liquors, less cruel and ferocious in their manners, and more attentive to the arts of civilized life, particularly agriculture. Of late, proposals have been laid before the Society for some farther extension of their exertions, by establishing schools in the Indian territories, for educating in the principles of Christianity, literature, and civilization, the children of the Indians, particularly those of the Sachems or chief men; and also for sending a new mission into the remote, and hitherto almost unexplored country of the Cherokees. Those proposals appeared to them to merit attention: The first of them, for erecting some new schools for the education of Indian youth, they have already taken measures for adopting; the other is a matter of such difficulty, and attended with such expence, that far more information must be obtained, as to the method of carrying it into execution, and its probable success, before the Directors will think themselves vindicated in making the attempt. A plan formerly under consideration, for conveying the knowledge of the Gospel to Africa, by means of some emancipated and converted negroes of Rhode Island, has again been renewed; and the Directors have written to the respectable clergymen with whom the proposal originated, for such information as may enable them to judge of its practicability.

The concluding part of the translation of the Gaelic Bible is now in the press, and part of it printed off. From the nature of the work, and the uncommon attention it requires, the progress is necessarily slow; but the public may rest assured, that no care shall be

wanting, to carry it on with as little delay as circumstances will allow.

In the Appendix to last anniversary sermon, the Directors stated their proceedings in regard to the execution of the will of the late pious Lady Glenorchy, and the funds destined for the improvement of the estates of Breadalbane and Sutherland. To what is there detailed in relation to the first of these estates, the Directors have nothing to add, but that the continuance of the co-operation and encouragement of the noble proprietor and his men of business, gives the pleasing prospect of much satisfaction to the Society, as well as benefit to the country, from this well-directed legacy. In regard to that part of it, intended for the estate of Sutherland, it was then mentioned that a plan for the disposal of it had been formed, after much enquiry and correspondence on the subject, and transmitted to the noble proprietors for their consent and co-operation. The stipulations required by the Society were so moderate, and so similar to those cheerfully agreed to by many other proprietors in the Highlands, that the Directors would not allow themselves to doubt of a ready compliance on the part of those of the estate of Sutherland. It is with deep regret that they find themselves obliged to acknowledge that their hopes had been too sanguine. The Directors are unwilling to enter into a detail of the correspondence which took place between the noble proprietors and them on the subject. Suffice it to say, that upon finding, after repeated endeavours, that they could not obtain for the teachers, male and female, whom they proposed to appoint in that country, the accommodations

necessary, and usually granted, they were reluctantly compelled to take advantage of that clause in Lady Glenorchy's will, by which, in case of a refusal of co-operation upon the part of the proprietors of either estate, the Directors should be at liberty to bestow the money in any part of the Highlands or islands where they should think proper. It is but justice however, to Earl Gower to state, that altho' he did not choose to agree to the terms of the Directors, they were assured by his desire, that he had given orders to his agent to allow annually for charitable purposes upon the estate, a sum equal to that, which, from the present state of the fund, would have arisen from Lady Glenorchy's legacy. The Directors have only to add, upon this subject, which of all their communications to the public concerning their proceedings is the least gratifying to their own feelings, that upon receiving the last answer from the noble proprietors, which precluded all hopes of a speedy renewal of the correspondence with any prospect of success, they came to the following resolution; with which they shall leave the subject, and their own conduct, to the decision of an impartial public. " The Directors having read, and maturely considered, the whole of the correspondence which has taken place between the Countess of Sutherland, in name of herself and Lord Gower, upon the one part, and the secretary of the Society, under the sanction of the authority of the committee on the other: Find, That, the proprietors of the estate of Sutherland, have declined to co-operate with the Directors in their plan for the improvement of the inhabitants of that estate in religion and industry: And that in conse-

" quence, the Directors are, by the terms of Lady
 " Glenorchy's will, prevented from laying out the
 " money which she intended for that estate, in the
 " manner which appeared to them best adapted to pro-
 " mote the object, which the pious testatrix had in
 " view: That they are therefore at liberty to bestow
 " that money in promoting the general objects of the
 " Society in any part of the Highlands and islands,
 " where it shall appear to them to be necessary. At
 " the same time, the Directors, deeply sensible of the
 " necessity which the estate of Sutherland labours un-
 " der of the means of instruction, both with respect to
 " literature and industry, and feeling sincere compassion
 " for the people, **RESOLVE**, That whenever any appli-
 " cation shall be made from any part of that country
 " for aid from the funds of the Society, and proper
 " security given for the fulfilment of the conditions re-
 " quired by its fundamental rules, they will gladly
 " listen to such application."

It only remains, that in this abstract of their pro-
 ceedings since the last publication, the Directors should
 state the progress of the Secretary in the execution of
 the commission granted him in the year 1789; the par-
 ticular objects of which were recited in the Appendix
 of that year.

Having employed the greatest part of two Summers
 preceding, in visiting very different and extensive dis-
 tricts of the Highlands and islands, the Secretary flat-
 tered himself, that he should have been able, during
 the course of this last, to have fulfilled all that he
 originally proposed in the discharge of his commission.
 And had his attention been confined to the mere *visita-*
tion of the schools already upon the establishment of the

Society, it is probable that he might have accomplished this object. But in consequence of the late very great accession to their funds, which has been already stated, the Society were led to enlarge their ideas and their plans to a scale corresponding with their extended capacities of usefulness.

The remote western Highlands and islands, of all the countries of Scotland, were the least known to the Society, and, of all those to which their attention is called by their patents, had least experienced the benefit of their institution. It was resolved that the Secretary should visit these distant and widely extended districts, enquire into the state of religion, literature, and industry among their inhabitants, and report to the Society such plans as should appear most likely to promote their improvement. A general outline of a tour for this purpose was agreed upon by the Directors in concert with the Secretary ; and he was instructed to begin his journey as soon after the anniversary meeting in June as possible.

On account of the extent, variety, and difficulty of the navigation which this tour involved, it was judged absolutely necessary that a vessel should be provided or obtained to attend him, during the course of it. To have hired one of a competent size, would have been attended with great expence : besides that, scarcely any one could have been got for hire so well adapted to the purpose, as one of the revenue cutters in the service of Government.

From the well known liberality of the Board of Customs, in promoting all objects of public utility, and from the private information of one of its respectable members, the Society were led to hope, that an appli-

station to them for one of the yachts under their immediate direction, would not fail of success. The President having accordingly applied in name of the Society to the Board, a most polite answer was received; and the *Prince of Wales* brig, commanded by Captain John Campbell, was ordered to be in readiness at Oban by the 25th of June, to take on board the Secretary, and proceed with him during the whole of his tour. And here the Directors think it nothing more than justice to mention, that in this vessel the Secretary found most excellent accommodation; a careful obliging commander, sober, attentive, and diligent officers and seamen: of all of whom, every one was more ready than another to oblige him, and to forward the objects of his mission.

The Secretary having set out from Edinburgh in the middle of June, proceeded by the way of Glasgow, Dumbarton, and Inverary, to Oban; visiting such of the Society's schools as lay immediately on his road, but not diverted by any that lay remote from it, from the great objects of this Summer's tour, viz. the distant western coasts and remoter islands of the Hebrides.

Having gone aboard the yacht at Oban, he proceeded through the sound of Mull to Tobermory, one of the newly established villages of the British Society, where their operations are going on with spirit, and already make a respectable appearance; visited the western parts of the island of Mull, where he had not been during the course of his former tour; sailed up Loch Sunart, an arm of the sea, stretching 35 miles into the mainland on the opposite coast, to Strontian, a station where

the Society have long had a school established; went round the point of Ardnamurchan, a promontory stretching far into the western ocean, beat by an almost continually turbulent sea; and sailed along the coasts of Moydaer, Arisaig, and Mores, inhabited chiefly by Roman Catholics, though now, in consequence of the progress of sheep-farming, their numbers are greatly diminished by emigration.

On this extensive coast the Society have only one school established, and even that is in a languishing state. He proceeded to the island of Egg, the chief of four small isles, of which the parish of that name consists; and, accompanied by the minister, sailed to a harbour in Skye, the southermost parish of the vast island of Sky; having traversed a considerable part of that parish, he crossed over to the coast of Knoxdart, and visited a school of the Society there. Proceeded to Glenelg, where he had the pleasure to meet the synod of the bounds, though, on account of the singular violence and long continuance of a storm at the time, few, comparatively, of the clergy had been able to assemble. From them who did meet in the synod, both collectively and individually, he experienced much attention, and received much information. From Glenelg, accompanied by some of the ministers, the Secretary travelled, sometimes by water, and sometimes on horseback or on foot, through the parishes of Kintail, Lochalsh, Lochcarron, and Applecross. From thence to the islands of Scalpa and Raasa;—back to Sky; traversed Diurnish, Bracadale, Snizort, Kilminnie and Portree, extensive parishes in that great island;—a part of his tour which, from the badness of

the greater part of the roads, and the almost incessant rain of that watery climate, was attended with no small fatigue.

From Sky he sailed to Lochbroom; visited several schools of the Society in that country; and among the rest, one established at Ullapool, the first and most favoured settlement of the British Society; and where, in consequence of the request of that Society, the Directors have established a school-master, who is at the same time an ordained minister, and officiates every Sunday to a numerous congregation, by whom his usefulness is felt and acknowledged.

From Ullapool the Secretary sailed to Stornoway, a populous and thriving village in the island of Lewis, the property of Humberston M'Kenzie of Seaforth, Esq. There, in concert with the proprietor, (who discovered a most laudable zeal for the object), the ministers of the four extensive parishes into which this great island is divided, together with some intelligent and respectable people of Stornoway, some plans were devised for promoting the much needed improvement of the inhabitants, in religion, literature, and industry, and put into a fair train for being carried into execution.

From Stornoway he sailed by the coast of Harris, to North Uist, and, accompanied by the ministers of Harris, North Uist, and Barra, travelled on horseback through North Uist, and over the strands at low water, to Benbecula and South Uist; crossed over to Barra; sailed to the islands of Cana, Rum, Col, Tiree; and returning by the Sound of Mull, and passing the islands adjoining to the coast of Argyleshire, which he had

visited on a former tour, went to those of Jura and Isla ; in the last mentioned of which, the exertions and success of that indefatigable and sagacious improver, Mr. Campbell of Shawfield, affected his mind with equal pleasure and surprise. From Isla he sailed round the Mull of Kintyre to Campbelton, and returned by Aran and Bute to Greenock and Glasgow, after an absence of three months and some days.

During the course of this various and extensive tour, the Secretary experienced every where from the gentlemen and clergy the greatest personal attention, and that hospitality for which they have been always and justly celebrated. Among those whom, on this account, he mentioned with respect and gratitude in his journal, are Sir James Riddel of Ardnamurchan and Sunart, Bart., Mr. M'Kenzie of Applecross, Colonel M'Leod of M'Leod, Mr. M'Kenzie of Seaforth, Mr. M'Donald of Boisdale, Mr. M'Lean of Col, and Mr. Campbell of Shawfield, Mr. Maxwell, factor for the Duke of Argyll in Mull, Mr. Campbell, his Grace's chamberlain in the island of Tirii, and Mr. M'Donald of Liendale in Sky. To all his brethren of the clergy without exception, with whom he had access to meet, he acknowledged his obligations for their attention and civilities : The personal attendance and fatigue to which they submitted in forwarding his progress, and the objects of his mission, render a particular tribute of thanks due to Mr. M'Iver of Glenelg ; Mr. M'Queen of Applecross ; Mr. M'Leod of Harris ; and Mr Edmund M'Queen of North Uist. Nor was he unmindful of what he owed to some of the clergy of the Roman Catholic persuasion for their personal civilities, and what he still more highly valued,

the liberality of spirit, and zeal with which they entered into, and forwarded the objects of his mission, particularly by exhorting and using their influence with their people to send their children to the schools of the Society, to be instructed in literature, and in those great principles of religion in which all sects among Christians are united. It was a fight, he is persuaded, not common—a Protestant minister, commissioned by the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge, attended in his progress by Roman Catholic priests, and they zealously joining with him in common efforts, to promote the reading of the scriptures, among the youth of their own community. For his introduction to them, and their favourable impressions of his views, he acknowledged his obligations to the candid and fair representations of a worthy and respectable person among the superior order of the clergy of that persuasion in Scotland.—Names, in this part of the detail, prudence suggests, it may be proper to omit.

To several of the above named great proprietors, the Secretary was indebted, not merely for hospitality and personal attentions, but for the zeal with which they entered into the views and the liberality which they exercised in promoting the objects of his mission, on their extensive estates. Among these, Seaforth, M'Leod, and Shawfield, are to be numbered with particular respect. The Duke of Argyll, though his want of health at the time, deprived the Secretary of the honour of waiting upon him in person; yet, with the wanted, and well known benevolence of his character, furnished his men of business with the amplest instructions to promote the objects of the Secretary's commission, in

the different parts of his immense estate ;—instructions, with which, in the spirit that dictated them, they are studying to comply.

The Secretary's journal concludes with the following general observations, and propositions, which were read first to the Directors, and then to a general meeting of the Society ; the Directors judged it expedient to lay them also before the public at large.

“ Thus, the Secretary has endeavoured to fulfil the objects of the commission given to him by the Society in the tour marked out for him for the present season. It is by far the most extensive, and in a variety of respects, the most interesting, which he has ever undertaken in their service. Having kept a regular journal of his proceedings, he thinks it his duty to offer it as it is, in its simple unornamented form, to the candid attention of his constituents *. It presents a melancholy picture of a vast extent of country, and of the situation of a great multitude of our fellow citizens. He put down, with fidelity, upon the spot, whatever occurred to him to be necessary to exhibit their real circumstances ; and the painful result of the whole is, that poverty, ignorance, and idleness, or rather the want of proper and profitable industry, generally obtain in the remoter western coasts and islands ; in some extensive districts, he is sorry to be obliged to add, neglect, and even oppression. To attempt to remedy prevailing disorders, and to afford some supply to the defects by which they

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* Being too long to be read to a meeting, it was handed round among the members individually.

are in great measure occasioned, is the unquestionable duty of the Society.

After perusing the report which he has given in, the members, he is persuaded, will join with the secretary, in grateful acknowledgments to a kind Providence, which by the late wonderful accession to their funds, has enabled them so far to enlarge their scheme, as to embrace within its benevolent compass, many parts of the ancient kingdom of Scotland hitherto in great measure neglected. The Secretary has stated, as he went along, the objects in these parts which most immediately claim the attention of the Society: the establishments for religion, literature, and industry, which appear to be chiefly wanted: the encouragements which they may expect to meet with, and the obstacles which may oppose their beneficent exertions.

The Secretary begs leave to suggest, by way of conclusion to his long narrative, a few general observations which appear to be of importance; and then to offer some hints towards a plan for the disbursement of the Society's additional funds.

At first sight, one is apt to imagine, that nothing can be more easy, as nothing to a benevolent mind is so pleasant, as the distribution of money for charitable purposes. A narrower inspection, however, soon convinces every person of understanding, that to select the proper objects, and to bestow in such a manner as not to obstruct but to forward the general progress and welfare of Society, is a difficult task, requiring much investigation, and the exercise of a sound and vigorous mind.

In the present case, many obstacles to the benevolent designs of the Society arise from the remoteness of

the countries to which they extend, and the peculiar circumstances in which they are placed : Of these, perhaps, none can form a sufficiently distinct or impressive idea, who has not visited them, and had an opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with the situations and characters, habits and prejudices, of the different classes of the inhabitants. Such is the poverty of the great body of them, such their deficiency of the means of religion, literature, and industry, that the additional funds of the society, ample as they have now become, are by no means equal to the supply of their wants. Some discrimination, therefore, is necessary. Some general rules and fixed principles must be adopted and adhered to, else disorder, neglect of some most destitute situations, and general complaints of partiality and favouritism against the Directors, must ensue.

The FIRST principle, therefore, which ought in all cases to be acted upon, is, *that without co-operation and support from some having immediate interest, the Society ought never to bestow their funds in promoting any objects whatever in these countries.* But the only class of men from whom they can expect effectual co-operation, are either the proprietors of estates, or substantial tacksmen, who can give the security of long leases for the performance of their covenants.

The body of the people are so poor and dispirited, and hold their possessions by so insecure a tenure, that upon them no dependence can be placed.

The experience of the Society for many years, too amply vindicates this assertion. In a multitude of instances which have fallen under the observation of

the Secretary, where the most liberal promises of accommodation to their teachers were given, scarcely any of them have been fulfilled. The teachers have been forced, out of their small salaries, to pay for the essential articles, which, by the rules of the Society and the engagements of the people, should have been furnished to them gratis. The consequences are, extreme indigence, depression of spirits, negligence of duty, and contempt.

Let no urgency of intreaty, therefore, and no clamancy of situation ever induce the Directors to depart from their established rules upon this point; and to secure the fulfilment of engagements, *let no teacher ever be sent to a station till the articles conditioned for are actually provided.*

This principle may seem harsh: It may be said, that where the people are too poor to be able, and the proprietors unwilling to furnish the accommodations required, it is hard that the people should suffer—that they are only objects of the greater commiseration. It is confessed that it is hard, and in many cases a matter of just and deep regret. But, as has been mentioned, general rules *must* be adhered to, else unavoidable confusion must ensue; and besides, it is certain, that however averse some proprietors may be to give encouragement for cultivating the minds and morals of their people; yet, *as many* will be found willing, as will exhaust the funds which the Society can afford, or are entitled by the will of the donors to bestow, upon these objects: and if people who essentially require it, are instructed, it matters not to the Society whether it be in this, or that corner of the country.

ANOTHER principle which the Society will do well to attend to, is, to guard against a too liberal distribution of their funds in the first instance. By this observation, it is not meant to insinuate that they should restrain a liberal spirit. Good men have amply endued the Society ; and the only return which they can make, is to devote their gifts to the great and important ends for which they were bestowed. It is suggested only that they should be careful to avoid anticipating by a premature application, funds which they may hereafter see cause to apply to still more important and beneficial purposes.

The late surprising increase of the Society's stock has been published every where, and excited a general desire in the Highlands and Islands to profit by it. Many applications have been made in consequence, and many more may be expected. Among these, let the Directors, after a careful and mature investigation, select those which shall appear most likely to prove immediately beneficial to the country. Let them be on their guard against plausible representations and general and fair promises. Promises are easily made; and where the acquisition of money is the object, the inhabitants of a poor country are generally profuse of them ; but the Society may learn, from past experience, to take every possible precaution in order to secure performance. By this plan of proceeding, they may, and probably will, give offence to, and bring upon themselves the reproaches of interested individuals ; but they will thus most effectually guard against jobbing, and best promote the general interest of the country.

The Secretary, though he presumes to throw out this general hint with respect to caution in the destination of their new funds, yet takes the liberty to say to the Directors, and to the Society, that upon perusing his report, he hopes the members will find no cause to accuse him of a narrow or illiberal spirit in conducting his tour. Though he ever made it his endeavour to avoid unnecessary expence ; yet he considered himself as the confidential servant and representative of a great and respectable community, furnished with ample funds for promoting public and important objects. He travelled in countries where the fruits of the Society's bounty had been hitherto but sparingly scattered ; and the nature of the institution, and the character of its members but imperfectly known. It behoved him therefore to act, not as his own humble sphere, and narrow funds would have dictated, but in the spirit of that character with which he was invested. In every case he studied to act as it occurred to him his constituents would have wished him to do. If, after receiving *certain* + information of the splendid legacy of Lord Vanvryhouven, he gave more largely to the poor neglected teachers of the Society than otherwise he would have thought himself warranted to do, he imagined that Providence, by furnishing the *means*, conveyed the *instruction*, to relieve the wants and make glad the hearts of those suffering, and some of them very meritorious servants of the public ; and in so doing, he persuades himself the Directors will not think he has exceeded

+ Intelligence of this legacy was received, but not sufficiently authenticated, when the Secretary set out upon his journey.

the discretionary powers with which they invested him.

Having stated these few general observations, the Secretary begs leave to subjoin the following propositions towards the formation of a plan for the disposal of the newly acquired, and great accession to the Society's stock.

The first* is, That *the salaries of the schoolmasters upon their establishment be augmented*. The fall of the value of money, since many of these salaries were first granted, and the consequent rise in the price of all the

* The necessity of this measure is particularly urgent in many of the western coasts and islands, where the extreme poverty of the inhabitants renders them unable, and their own ignorance averse, to bestow even a trifle for the education of their children. In many instances, during his last tour, the Secretary, in order to induce parents to send their children to school, was obliged to promise them a total exemption from fees of every sort, besides furnishing them with books.

In these countries the price of meal is always higher than upon the east coast, and in the low countries of Scotland. This last Summer it was on an average, at least 18*s. per boll*. The difficulty of transporting it to the interior parts of countries where there are no roads, greatly enhances the price to schoolmasters, who have no servants or horses of their own. The Secretary found some who had paid no less than 25*s. per boll* for it, when laid down at their houses. In not a few cases during the course of last Summer, they could not, for weeks together, obtain it at any price. It may appear incredible, but is nevertheless an undoubted fact, that in the months of June and July last, there was not an ounce of meal to be obtained for money by the people of some extensive districts and islands—their potatoes were exhausted, and they were reduced to the necessity of living wholly on fish and milk. Cockles and other shell-fish were often their chief support. How much, in such circumstances, is a man to be pitied who has to maintain himself and a family upon a salary of 10*l.* or 12*l.*?

Parochial schoolmasters in these countries are in very little better condition than those of the society. The *maximum* of the legal salary,

necessaries of life renders this a measure of indispensable necessity, if the Directors wish to see the teachers on their establishment relieved from absolute poverty, and placed upon a respectable and useful footing. But this augmentation ought not to extend indiscriminately to *all* the teachers. Some have already salaries fully adequate both to their merits and to their necessities, while others, and they most deserving servants of the public, are in poor and distressed circumstances. Let the augmentation be conducted with a strict regard to the circumstances of each particular case.

The second is, *The printing of a new edition of the Gaelic Bible* in a more convenient and cheaper form than the present, which consists of four octavo volumes, and is consequently too bulky to answer the purposes of those for whom it is chiefly intended. When the volume of the Old Testament scriptures now in the press, shall be completed, the whole impression (according to the plan formerly agreed upon for disposing of it) will be speedily exhausted—a new edition will then become absolutely necessary, and is certainly

together with the trifling addition of their fees as session clerks, and what they receive from the few who can afford to pay for education to their children, make altogether but a miserable provision for a man of *some* education and literature, with a family. In a variety of cases, they are restricted to the *minimum*, or 5 l. 11 s. 1 d. 4-12ths. The consequence is, that men of merit cannot be found to supply these stations, or to remain in them; and in fact, many of them are vacant. In some instances, the salaries of two, in some of three or four parishes, are united to constitute a decent provision for one schoolmaster for them all. How much is it to be regretted, that the gentlemen of landed property in Scotland should have been induced to oppose the moderate and reasonable claims for an augmentation of salary, to these most useful and necessary servants of the public, and especially of those in these remote countries, where no talents, no industry, and no success in teaching can possibly better their living?

a debt which the Society owes to the public, as well as to the great and fundamental objects of their institution. Meantime the impression of the Gaelic New Testament being now almost wholly distributed, a new edition of that part of the scriptures alone, corresponding to the form and type of the future intended edition of the Old, becomes necessary ; and this, it is imagined, the Directors will see cause to give orders for setting about without delay.

The third, The establishment of a variety of new schools for literature and the English language, and the principles of religion.*

* The importance of erecting new schools in the Highlands, and particularly in the western coasts and Hebrides, may be in some measure collected from the preceding note. Add to this, that from Loch Sunart, the arm of the sea above mentioned, on the side of which, lie Ardnamurchan and Sunart, to Cape Wrath, the extreme promontory of the main land on the western coast, and round by the Long Island*, including Sky, and all the intermediate isles, to Mull, comprehending an immense extent of country, and a vast multitude of people, and though it is divided into twenty-six parishes, and of consequence provided in twenty-six ministers, yet there are among all these parishes but about fifteen parochial schoolmasters. To supply these countries even tolerably with the means of education, six times that number would not be sufficient. In a parish twenty or thirty miles long, and of a proportional breadth, (which many of them are, and even beyond that extent) intersected besides by mountains, rapid impassable rivers, or arms of the sea, and destitute of roads, one schoolmaster, it is evident, can be of use only to one district ; the great body of the inhabitants derive no benefit from the school. Is it to be wondered, that ignorance of the first principles of religion and literature, and a total unacquaintedness with the English language should generally prevail among the inhabitants ? or can the society do a more essential service to the interest of religion and of the country, than as far as in their power, to supply their defects by the erection of new schools ?

* Under that name are included Lewis, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, and Barra with their dependent islands.

In the report of the Secretary, many different stations in the Western Highlands and islands are specified where such schools are most essentially wanted, and where the proprietors are willing to give the necessary accommodations. A scheme for these much needed establishments, it is not to be doubted, will be digested with all possible care by the committee, when the proper time shall arrive, and submitted to the directors for their approbation. Whether among these, a few schools upon a higher scale, and calculated for teaching branches of education of a superior class to those of the ordinary run of the Society's establishment (navigation, for example, and the elements of mathematics among sea-faring people), may not be proper, is a subject well deserving the particular attention of the directors at a subsequent period.

*The fourth. * The giving encouragement to various branches of useful industry and manufacture, which may be introduced into the Highlands and Islands.* To this ob-

* A variety of causes have contributed to produce that rage for emigration to America, which now obtains, in many parts of the Highlands and Islands. Among these are to be numbered, it is true, the causes commonly assigned, viz. the dispeopling, in great measure, of large tracts of country in order to make room for sheep;—the conversion of small into great farms, to the exclusion of the inferior order of tenants;—the prejudice, almost invincible, which many Highland proprietors entertain against granting any leases, or leases of a sufficient length to encourage the tenants to improve their farms;—the eagerness with which some landholders raise their rents, while they furnish neither the *means* nor *instruction* as to the *manner* by which the tenants may be enabled to pay them; the non-residence of the proprietors, and their total want of tenderness for, or attention to their people, in consequence of which the ancient confidence and affection subsisting between Chiefs and their clans are *greatly* weakened, in some parts of the country, *totally* annihilated. Add to these, the claims of affection and kindred,

ject the attention of the Society is naturally directed by the terms and spirit of their second patent, and to this they are specially bound by the express conditions of Lord Vanvryhouven's legacy.

vehemently urged, by those who have already emigrated, on their friends and neighbours at home, to induce them to follow their example; and the flattering, perhaps insidious, representations of agents, employed by purchasers of land in America to engage settlers to remove to their estates—add likewise, the contagion of example, and the infectious spirit of wandering, which often, without reason from the immediate pressure of grievances felt, seizes upon a body of people; and you have a list of the commonly assigned, and in part true causes of emigration. At the same time, an attentive and general observation of the present state of the Highlands and Islands, it is imagined, will fully warrant the assertion, that the great and most universally operating cause of emigration, is, *that in comparison of the means of subsistence which they afford, these countries are greatly over-stocked with inhabitants.*

Intestine wars and feuds, by which numbers of them in former ages were cut off, have for many years been unknown. No drains for the supply of the army and navy have of late been made. Add to this, that the people are prolific to an uncommon degree. Want and misery staring them in the face, prevent not, among these simple uncorrupted people, the early marriage of both sexes; and the children seldom fail to be numerous.

The climate in these countries is generally unfriendly to the growth of corn. Rains prevail through a great part of the year; seed-time and harvest are late, and the scanty crop is with difficulty got in, seldom without injury from the weather. Oats and barley, or rather bear, both of an inferior kind, are almost the only species of grain raised in these countries. Oats, at an average, yield only about three, and bear about six returns. The expence of raising even these poor crops, in comparison of their value, is immense. From these various causes, many most intelligent observers of the state of these countries are of opinion, that the raising of corn ought seldom comparatively to be attempted in the Western Highlands and Islands, and that the attention of farmers ought to be confined to the improvement of their pasture lands, and the cultivation of potatoes, and other green crops.—Were the odious and

But in no one branch of the conduct of the Society are they in greater danger of being misled to serve the purposes of visionary, or selfish and interested individuals.

unproductive tax upon coals to be abolished, and the salt-laws so amended or explained, that that essential commodity might be furnished in abundance to the people for the curing of their fish for home-consumption, their condition would be amended to an astonishing degree. But to the compleat improvement of the country, and the situation of its inhabitants, the introduction of manufactures is indispensably necessary. Of these they are ignorant to a degree almost inconceivable by people who live only a hundred miles from them.

Spinning *on the wheel*, the simplest branch of female industry, is in many parts of the country almost unknown. The coarse cloths used for home consumption, both linen and woollen, are spun by the women on the *distaff*, chiefly while engaged in attending the cattle, or in the labours of the field, a great part of the drudgery of which is performed by *them*, while the men are either idle, or engaged in fishing. Women carry sea weed to the kelp kilns, and manure to the fields, on their backs; and in many respects are used as beasts of burden. To almost all the arts of female industry within doors they are strangers; so that the greatest part of the winter months they spend in absolute idleness, subsisting, along with the rest of the families to which they belong, upon two meals of the coarsest fare in the 24 hours; and happy would the bulk of the people in these countries deem themselves, if even of such fare they had twice in the day what would satisfy the demands of nature.

The introduction of manufactures into these countries of all expedients is the best adapted for their improvement. This is a proposition too obvious to require proof or illustration. Difficulties, as may naturally be supposed, must attend the accomplishment of this object; but were proprietors to pay that attention to it which its importance to their own interest, as well as the happiness of their people, demand, it is imagined that these difficulties would soon be found not only not unsurmountable, but easy to be overcome.

Among the causes which contributed to prevent the success of former attempts for the introduction of manufactures into the Highlands, may

Schemes for the introduction of manufactures into the Highlands, especially those conducted upon large scales, and with large capitals, have generally failed.—

be reckoned the very great expence in buildings, salaries to agents, factors, &c. with which they were conducted, and their aiming at too high objects at the outset.

To begin with the simplest principles; to make the people employed feel the immediate and *full* benefit of their own industry; and to proceed gradually, suffering the manufacture to support itself, or nearly so, in its various progressive stages, seems to be the most probable, as it surely is the least hazardous mode of ensuring success.

The spinning of flax, hemp, cotton, or wool, is the first step towards the introduction of the manufactures best adapted to the Highlands and Islands. Different opinions are entertained as to which of them the preference is due. The argument in favour of *wool*, the raw material being the produce of the country, is unquestionably strong. But if inclination, convenience, or interest, should lead to a preference of any of the rest, why should not the experiment be made? Let but the spirit, the habits, and profits of industry, be introduced among the people, and one species of manufacture will be found by no means to interfere with another. It will rather excite an emulation favourable to all. Habits of application and industry, when once formed, may easily be directed into that channel which experience shall teach to be most advantageous.

Indolence is commonly considered as the most predominant feature in the character of the Highlanders—nothing can be a greater mistake—no people are more quick-sighted in discerning their own interest, when placed within the sphere of their observation, or more patient and persevering in its pursuit. If, indeed, when but half fed and half clothed, their spirit broken by oppression, and they forced to labour not for themselves or their families, but for others, their exertions are but feeble, it is not to be wondered. But whenever the Highlanders enjoy the common advantages which free Britons do in other parts of the kingdom, experience and observation warrant the assertion, that they are excelled by none in quickness of apprehension or alertness of execution. Their spirit and activity in the army and navy are well known, and have been the subject of many eulogiums from persons of the most distinguished character. Their sobriety, regularity and steadiness in com-

It is not proposed at present to enter into a detail of the causes of their miscarriage. In the Secretary's last tour, a variety of hints upon this subject are given. At pre-

mon life, are no less highly celebrated by all who have had occasion to employ them as labourers or artisans in works in which use has taught them skill and dexterity.

How much then will it be a subject of regret, if a body of people possessing such natural capacities of usefulness, shall, in consequence of the spirit of emigration to America, which now prevails, be for ever lost to their own country! However unconcerned many proprietors may be as to this point; however they may coldly and unfeelingly think, and declare, that whatever loss the public may sustain, emigration is of advantage to them, by relieving their estates of a useless incumbrance; some gentlemen of extensive fortune and influence, more liberal and extensive in their views, have manifested a laudable zeal for the prevention of so great an evil to their country—and the patriotic exertions of some private citizens who have of late distinguished themselves by the wise and prudent plans they have devised for this purpose, will not, it is to be hoped, fail of success*.

Administration, it is scarcely to be doubted, will take this matter into serious consideration, and adopt such measures as in a consistency with the liberties and genius of a free people, and united with the efforts of individuals and private societies, may induce the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands still to retain their wonted preference of their native country above every foreign clime.

To introduce and give encouragement to *manufactures* among them, it has already been stated, is one of the most obvious and easy to be accomplished methods which can be followed for this purpose; and, to the attainment of this object, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge will not be wanting, by such measures as, upon mature investigation, shall appear to be best adapted to the end. Of these, one of the simplest, as well as most congenial to their institution and pros-

* The Secretary was assured, upon authority, which appeared to him conclusive, that, since the year 1772, no less than fifteen vessels full of emigrants have sailed from the western parts of the counties of Inverness and Ross alone, containing, it is supposed, six thousand four hundred souls, and carrying with them, in specie, at least 38,400 l. Sterling.

sent it is sufficient to mention, that to no plan having industry and manufactures for its professed object, should the Directors be induced to give pecuniary aid, (except by the appointment of teachers) which is not actually begun, and to a certain length proceeded in, by persons residing on the spot, and having a personal interest in the success of the plan, of which the object is recommended as probable, and likely to succeed, by persons of character, competent to decide upon the subject.

*The fifth, * The establishment of missionary ministers in parts of the country where they are peculiarly wanted,*

cities, the appointment of persons properly qualified to teach the first rudiments of industry and manufactures to a rude and ignorant people. But they will naturally look for, and insist upon, the countenance and co-operation of the proprietors of those estates into which these improvements are proposed to be introduced.

* The want of a sufficient number of established clergy for conducting the offices of religion, is well known, and has long been complained of, as one of the greatest grievances which these countries labour under.

The report of Doctors Dick, Hyndman, &c. appointed by the General Assembly 1760 to visit the Highlands and Islands is, on this point, equally just and happily expressed. " Many parishes in these countries, especially in the Western Highlands and Islands, are so extensive as to render the charge of them utterly disproportioned to the ability of the most active ministers. Several of them resemble rather a province requiring the labours of a body of clergy, than a district fit for the inspection of a single pastor. When to the extent of these parishes we add the difficulty of communication between the several parts of them, from the rivers, lakes, and huge mountains, which intersect the western continent, and from the dangerous fæs which separate these islands, it is easy to conceive, that during a great part of the year many of the inhabitants must be deprived of all correspondence with their pastors, and destitute of all public means of instruction."

With this representation, those of Doctor Walker in 1765, and in 1772, perfectly accord; and that these countries, in this respect, still remain in the same melancholy situation, the Secretary of the Society had too abundant evidence, during the course of his last tour.

but to which the funds of the Committee on the Royal bounty, especially in their present situation, do not permit them to send missionaries.

The committee of the General Assembly annually appointed to manage the Royal bounty, (a donation of 1000 l. given every year by the King to the Assembly, for the reformation of the Highlands and Islands) have done what in them lay for the redress of this evil, by the appointment of itinerant ministers, besides a number of catechists. Of the former, twenty-three are at present upon their establishment, in different parts of the Highlands and Islands. Their salaries somewhat vary, but do not, at a medium, exceed 30 l. Small as this appointment is, it is as much as the limited fund of the committee enables them to give. And when it is considered that the far greater number of missionaries appointed by them have no dwelling-houses, and no accommodations of any sort, save what they pay for out of this small allowance, it is not to be wondered, that the majority of them, dissatisfied with their situation, should look out with anxiety for better settlements, or that their attention and efforts should ever be directed to this object.

It is impossible in the nature of things, that men so situated can enjoy the respect, or discharge the duties of the pastoral office with the authority of ministers considered as connected with their people by the tie of comfortable accommodations, and an adequate income. Add to this, that few of them *separately*, have churches, or even decent houses adapted to the purpose, for conducting the worship of God. Most of them have different stations, often at a great distance from one another, where they are bound to officiate. At these places the people of the districts convene on the previously appointed Lord's day; when the weather is tolerably favourable, they assemble on the side of a hill, or some where in the open air, and when it is otherwise, in some barn or house, the fittest for the purpose which they can find in the neighbourhood. In such circumstances, the poor missionary, after travelling on foot through muirs and mooses, climbing hills, and wading rivers, is obliged to preside in public worship, and when the fatigues of the day are over, has perhaps the same, or a similar journey to perform, before he can obtain lodging or refreshment.

When these facts are considered, (and they who are acquainted with the countries referred to, know that this is no exaggerated description), the Directors of the Society will not surely be blamed, if, as a preliminary condition to the establishment of every mission upon their funds, they shall insist upon having the accommodations above mentioned sur-

Upon considering the general clauses of the first patent erecting the Society into a corporation, there is little room for calling in question the right of the So-

nished to the minister. They are in themselves most reasonable ; they are essential to the comfort and respectability of men in their office, as well as to decency and propriety in the conduct of public worship. Provided in these, and in the salary proposed, the ministers will not regard *their missions* as mere temporary appointments, but as settlements in which they can live in comfort and independence ; their people will regard them, (if they approve themselves worthy of it) with the reverence due to fixed pastors, and attend upon the religious ordinances which they administer with comfort and edification.

The accommodations above proposed, it is evident, cannot be afforded by the *people* ; *Proprietors* alone are able to furnish them. The Secretary was sorry to find some gentlemen of extensive landed property in districts where establishments of this kind are peculiarly wanted, averse to agree to these conditions ; they were unwilling to be at the expence of the *buildings*, and their minds seemed to revolt at the idea of resigning the small portion of land above specified, for any purpose connected with the *Church*.

As to *expenses* of *plain houses*, (and plain houses alone, if comfortable, and adapted to their several purposes, will be required) it cannot be great, as the tenants will, without doubt, cheerfully furnish the carriages ; and *that proprietor* must have a limited income indeed, by whom it would be felt oppressive. And as to the so much dreaded alienation of land to churchmen, it is to be observed, that the few acres which may be granted to a *Missionary-Minister*, will not be of the nature of a *glisance*, legally and irredemably annexed to a living, on the establishment ; they will be given only *during*, and revocable *at pleasure*. The transaction will be of the nature of a covenant or bargain between two contracting parties. The Society, on the one part, shall agree, that while the state of the district shall require such an establishment, and the proprietor, or proprietors, shall continue to afford the stipulated accommodations, *they* shall allow to a *missionary minister* there, such a salary as shall be specified in the agreement. The terms on the part of the proprietor will exactly correspond.

Neither party, it is to be presumed, will ever act a part so absurd, as, without evident necessity, to violate the conditions of a transaction

ciety to establish missions upon their own proper funds. The will of Lady Glenorchy gives them undisputable authority to this effect, over the interest of 2500*l.* the unappropriated moiety of her legacy to the Directors. The vast extent of many pastoral charges in the Highlands and islands, and the absolute impossibility of the few established ministers discharging with propriety and effect the duties of their office, render an

of this public and important nature; but this much is deemed necessary to suggest, in order to remove the apprehensions of the Society's design to lay perpetual unalterable burdens upon landed property.

Though the Secretary found that the above objections had made too deep an impression upon the minds of some gentlemen of the Highlands, to leave room for hopes that they would agree to the conditions proposed, yet he had the happiness to meet with others animated by a different spirit, who were fully convinced of the necessity of having a greater number of clergymen settled in these countries, and heartily disposed to afford every accommodation necessary to render their situation comfortable and respectable. With one gentleman *, proprietor of a very great extent of country, the Directors have made some progress in a transaction for the establishment of a missionary minister upon his estate, and in a situation where an institution of this kind is peculiarly needed. His conduct has been liberal in no common degree, and has made a corresponding impression upon the minds of the Directors.

Other gentlemen have declared their willingness to act the same part, whose proposals are under consideration. Their example, it is to be hoped, will be followed by proprietors in other parts of the country where the defect of the means of instruction, and of the ordinances of religion, is one of the great evils felt and complained of by the people.

If the Society shall be willing to take upon themselves the greatest burden of establishments of this nature, which certainly is the annual burthen of the ministers, it cannot but appear hard, that gentlemen of rank and fortune should deprive their own people of the benefit resulting from them, on account of the comparatively trifling expence of the accommodations required.

* *M'Leod.*

increase of their number a most desirable and important object.

The Secretary has mentioned, in the course of his Journal, a few places, in different parts of the country, where such establishments are greatly needed, and where the proprietors expressed a hearty willingness to give whatever accommodations the Directors might think proper to demand for the ministers. Those which the Secretary took the liberty to mention, and without which, in his opinion, no mission ought to be established by the Society, are a comfortable dwelling-house, with suitable offices (a stable, barn and byre), as much land free of rent, both arable and pasture, as will maintain a horse and two cows throughout the whole year; and a decent place, or places appropriated for worship, wherever he shall be bound statelily to perform divine service.

With these accommodations, and a competent salary, (suppose 50 l. *per annum*), a minister may be comfortable and respected in any part of the Highlands and Islands: without these he must be poor and dependent; and consequently his respect and usefulness greatly obstructed.

If the Directors shall see proper to establish missions, and they cannot do a more essential service to those countries to which, by the constitution of the Society, their attention is confined, let them by all means take care, that the clergymen in their employment, be placed upon such an independent footing as to have no temptation to servility of spirit, discontentment

with their condition, or for bread, to devote their time and attention to secular business.

The *sixth*, and the only other proposition for the employment of their additional funds, which the Secretary shall take the liberty to mention, is, *a provision to be made for training up some young men having the Gaelic Language, for the ministry, in the Highlands and Islands.* This may be accomplished by the establishment of a certain specified number of pensions or bursaries for *Students of Divinity*. For Students of Philosophy, there is not so much occasion. The rules of the different Universities, as well as the laws of the Church, oblige every young man intended for the ministry, to study a regular course of Philosophy; and during that course there are many more aids from bursaries to be obtained than in that of Divinity. Besides, were the Society to establish bursaries for Philosophy, they could have no security that the young men who enjoyed them, would prosecute the study of Divinity.

What the Secretary therefore begs leave to suggest upon this subject is, that such young men, having the Gaelic language, and having finished their course of philosophy, as the Directors may choose to prefer, shall undergo an examination by some of their own members; and upon being found to have made a competent progress in their several branches of education, shall be appointed each to a pension, or bursary, (*of suppose 15 l.*) upon these express conditions, that during four sessions (the duration of the bursary) they shall reside constantly at Edinburgh, and thus be under

the immediate inspection of the ecclesiastical members of the Society, and enjoy the benefit of their advice and patronage, if they shall be found to deserve it; that they shall regularly attend the Divinity Hall, and the several Professors, whose classes shall be recommended to them, and without engaging in any other business, shall devote their whole time and attention to their proper studies.

By this plan, through the Divine blessing, it is to be hoped, that a succession of able and well educated young men may be trained up for supplying the missions which may be established by the Society, as well as other charges in the Highlands and Islands.

Thus the Secretary has taken the liberty to state to the Directors the ideas which have occurred to him upon this most interesting subject. The nature of his office, and his constant employment in the affairs of the Society, may naturally be supposed to have directed much of his attention to the institution, and to all those methods by which its great and benevolent objects may best be promoted; and the above plan, after mature deliberation, appears to him the best which they can adopt for employing their additional funds. He submits it, with deference, to the consideration of his constituents."

The Directors having read and considered the above paper, with much attention, referred it to a general meeting of the Society, by whom the spirit and objects of the plan contained in it, were unanimously approved, and referred back to the Directors to be still more maturely digested, and carried into execution, as circumstances may permit.

By ordering it to be printed, as a part of the Appendix to the anniversary sermon of the present year, the Directors will have an opportunity of learning the sentiments of the public concerning it; of those particularly who have directed their attention to the situation of the Highlands and Islands, and the means most proper to be used for their improvement.—The publication of these proposals, besides, will have the effect to satisfy the public, that although the funds of the Society have of late received a large addition, yet objects of great importance to the country are by no means wanting, sufficient, and far more than sufficient, to exhaust them. The Directors are fully determined against hoarding up, or wrapping in a napkin, the talents committed to them; on the contrary, in the spirit, with which they trust their revenue has hitherto been managed, their fixed purpose is to lay out the *whole*, as speedily as prudence will permit, in promoting those objects which shall appear to be best calculated for promoting the improvement of these parts of the kingdom to which their attention is directed. The measures which they may adopt for this purpose shall, from time to time, be faithfully stated to the public. If they shall be so happy as to preserve their continuing confidence; and, above all, if their faithful endeavours shall be crowned with success in promoting the best interests of religion and their fellow creatures, a monitor within their own bosoms will tell them that **THEIR REWARD IS GREAT.**

N. B. So few alterations have been made upon the scheme of the Society's Schools, annexed to the anniversary sermon of last year, that it was thought unnecessary to republish it. Considerable additions and alterations are in contemplation for the ensuing year, when the publication of their whole scheme of appointments will be proper, and may be expected.



THE PRESIDENT, DIRECTORS, AND OFFICERS

OF
SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR 1792.DAVID EARL OF LEVEN AND MELVILL
*PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.**Committee of Directors.**ROBERT EARL OF KINNOULL* President.

John Dickson, Esq. advocate.

Rev. William Paul, one of the ministers of St. Cuthbert's,

Mr. John Pitcairn merchant, Edinburgh.

Alexander Duncan, Esq. Clerk to the Signet.

William Macdonald, Esq. of St. Martins, Clk to the Signet.

Rev. Andrew Hunter, D. D. Professor of Divinity, and one
of the ministers of Edinburgh.

James Forrest, Esq. of Comiston, Clerk to the Signet.

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Rev. Walter Buchanan, one of the Ministers of Canongate,

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Rev. John Kemp, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, Secretary.

William Galloway, Esq. merchant in Edinburgh, Comptroller.

Robert Chalmers, Esq. General Accountant of Excise, Accountant.

John Davidson, Esq. Clerk to the Signet, Treasurer.

Mr. Archibald Lundie, Clerk to the Signet, Bookholder.

Mr. James Bonar, Excise-Office, Clerk.

M. Gray, Bookseller.

Mungo Watson, Beadle.

Annual and other Benefactions are received by

The Secretary, Treasurer, or any of the Principal Officers of the Society in Edinburgh.

IN LONDON,

By Thomas Coutts, Esq. Banker in the Strand.

Henry Hunter, D. D. Charles' Square, Hoxton, Secretary to the Corresponding Board in London.

William Fuller, Esq. and Son, Bankers, Lombard-Street.

Form of a Bequest or Legacy.

Item, I give and bequeath the sum of
to the *Society in Scotland*
for propagating Christian Knowledge, to be applied, either to
the general objects of the institution, or to such particular
purposes, consistent with these objects, as the donor may
think proper.

N. B. Those who may be pleased to favour this Society
with Bequests or Legacies, are intreated to express their in-
tention in the very words above directed; and particularly
to take care that the words, *in Scotland*, be not omitted.

Journal of a Geological Survey

1850. - The Journal of a Geological Survey of the State of New York, 1850.

1850. - The Journal of a Geological Survey of the State of New York, 1850.

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